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THESIS

RECYCLED BRICKS: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES TO REINTEGRATE RETURNING AMERICAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS USING EXISTING MODELS

by

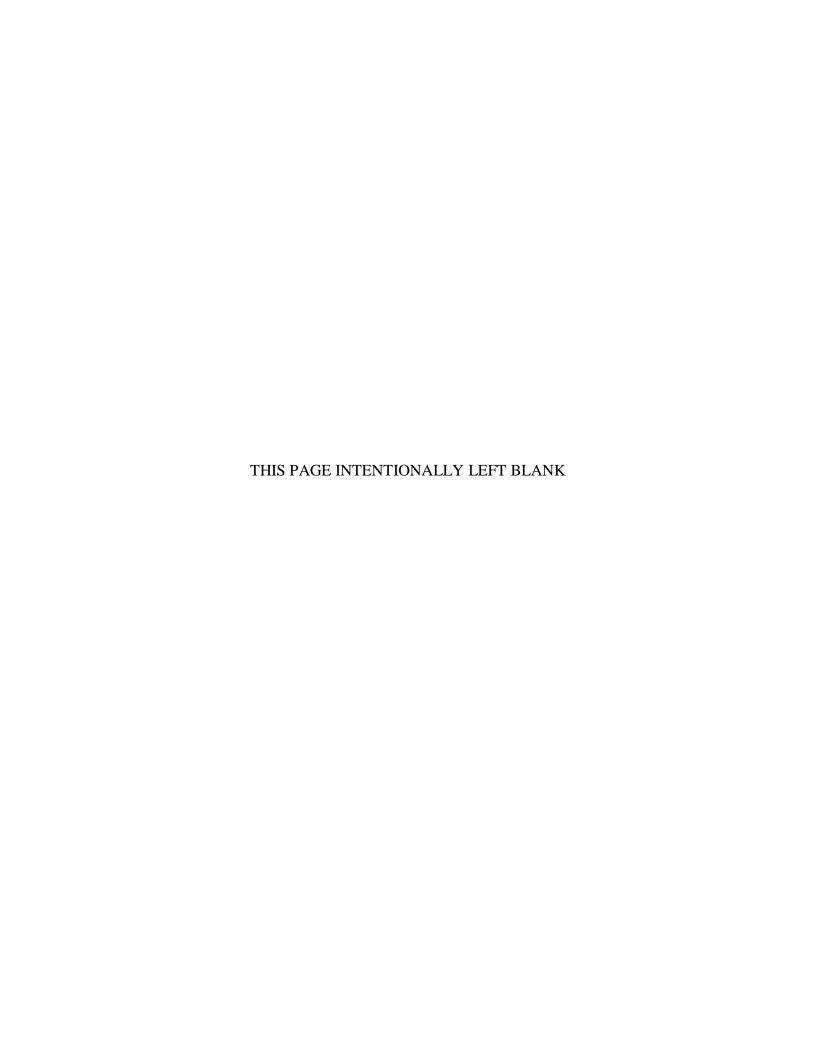Edward Francis Scott III

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Foreign fighters have been engaged in conflicts for hundreds of years, but the sheer number of foreign fighters who travel to Iraq and Syria during the last five years is unprecedented. The United States is not sure what to do with American ex-foreign fighters who leave their group and want to return to the States and peacefully reintegrate back into society, since currently there is no reintegration program for ex-foreign fighters. This thesis explores how the United States can develop an ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy using existing, analogous models. This study identifies two groups that possess similar characteristics to foreign fighters: U.S. street gangs and the U.S. military. Utilizing the conceptual frameworks of street gangs and the military, the conceptual life-cycle of foreign fighters is detailed to ascertain the practicality of developing a foreign-fighter reintegration program utilizing the existing reintegration programs of street gangs and the military. Based on the findings that foreign fighters, street gang members, and formerly deployed service members are very similar, I recommend the development of a multidisciplinary reintegration program for retuning ex-foreign fighters using specific aspects of each previously referenced reintegration program.

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RECYCLED BRICKS: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES TO REINTEGRATE RETURNING AMERICAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS USING EXISTING MODELS

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ABSTRACT

Foreign fighters have been engaged in conflicts for hundreds of years, but the sheer number of foreign fighters who travel to Iraq and Syria during the last five years is unprecedented. The United States is not sure what to do with American ex-foreign fighters who leave their group and want to return to the States and peacefully reintegrate back into society, since currently there is no reintegration program for ex-foreign fighters. This thesis explores how the United States can develop an ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy using existing, analogous models. This study identifies two groups that possess similar characteristics to foreign fighters: U.S. street gangs and the U.S. military. Utilizing the conceptual frameworks of street gangs and the military, the conceptual life-cycle of foreign fighters is detailed to ascertain the practicality of developing a foreign-fighter reintegration program utilizing the existing reintegration programs of street gangs and the military. Based on the findings that foreign fighters, street gang members, and formerly deployed service members are very similar, I recommend the development of a multidisciplinary reintegration program for retuning ex-foreign fighters using specific aspects of each previously referenced reintegration program.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AQ	al Qaeda
AQAP	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQI	al-Qaeda in Iraq
BUILD	Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development
Comprehensive	Gang Model Comprehensive Gang Prevention Intervention and Suppression Model
CTC	Combating Terrorism Center
CVE	countering violent extremism
DOD	Department of Defense
DOJ	which is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ICSR	International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence
I.S.	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NGC	National Gang Center
NSCTT	National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
PDHA	Post-Deployment Health Assessment
PDHRA	Post-Deployment Health Reassessment
PMD	post-deployment multi-symptom disorder
PPD	Pittsburg Police Department
Pre-DHA	Pre-Deployment Health Assessment
PTS	post-traumatic stress
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
TBI	traumatic brain injury
TFF	Total Force Fitness
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
YATS	Youth Attitude Tracking Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of foreign fighters who have traveled to Syria and Iraq between 2011 and 2015—including those from the United States—to join Islamic State (I.S.) and other Islamic foreign fighter groups is unprecedented. The issue for the United States is that since foreign fighter membership peaked in early 2015, it has been steadily decreasing. Some foreign fighters have been killed but others have become disillusioned with their group and their purpose for being a foreign fighter and have disengaged to return home or elsewhere to peacefully reintegrate back into society.[1] This poses an immediate security concern for the United States: what to do with U.S. foreign fighters who depart the conflict area and want to peacefully return to the United States and reintegrate back into society.

To address this question, this research project first identifies groups from within the United States that have existing reintegration programs that appear analogous to Islamic foreign fighters. Street gangs and the military, specifically the National Guard, are two groups with members who seem equivalent, in terms of the cognitive process of joining their respective group, to Islamic foreign fighters; the experiences and activities they partake as members of their group and the physical and cognitive process of disengaging from their groups are broadly comparable. U.S. street gangs utilize the Comprehensive Gang Model as their primary reintegration strategy,[2] and the U.S. military, including the National Guard, employ Total Force Fitness as their primary reintegration model.[3]

Prior to applying these reintegration strategies to construct an ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy, the conceptual life-cycle of U.S. street gang members and National

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[1] Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq," Soufan Group, 2015, 7, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

[2] "Resources and Tools," National Gang Center, 2016, https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Resources.

[3] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework," CJCSI Directive 3405.01. Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, September 1, 2011, A-1, http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/3405_01.pdf.

Guard members were independently deconstructed into three parts: joining their group, supporting their group, and disengaging and desisting from their group. Using the gang member and National Guard member life-cycles as independent frameworks, the life-cycle of foreign fighters was mapped to assess the similarities and differences between gang members and National Guard members, and foreign fighters. The research reveals that individual and group identity as well as group-sanctioned violence are two primary aspects of all three groups. The research also reveals that U.S. gang members and foreign fighters progress through similar cognitive processes to join their groups, and National Guard members and foreign fighters share similar experiences and activities that experienced by members of both groups during deployments. Members from all three groups go through role transition as they disengage from their group and attempt to acquire a new identity. An additional factor identified for some formerly deployed National Guard members, which may affect some returning ex-foreign fighters, is that they suffer from a variety of post-traumatic stress disorders as a result of their deployment.

Based on the noted similarities between U.S. street gang members and National Guard members to Islamic foreign fighters, an ex-foreign fighter reintegration model was constructed utilizing applicable components of the Comprehensive Gang Model and Total Force Fitness strategy. The resulting multidisciplinary reintegration strategy was designed to address the various motivations that caused individuals to initially become foreign fighters as well as the reasons that foreign fighters decide to disengage from their group and reintegrate back into society. Religious identity, acceptable use of violence, excitement, adventure, revenge, and financial benefits are all factors that motivate individuals to become foreign fighters. These factors are also important to foreign fighters as they contemplate disengagement from their group and is addressed by the ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy. The last aspect of the ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy is Suppression. Suppression is based on a relationship between the criminal justice system and ex-foreign fighters, whereby the ex-foreign fighter is constantly reminded of the negatives of foreign fighter group membership or association, to proactively prevent any type of relapse. It also enables local law enforcement to

reassure citizens that the ex-foreign fighters who reside in their communities are not a threat. Overall, the proposed ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy addresses ex-foreign fighters holistically, utilizing existing and proven components of the Comprehensive Gang Model and Total Force Fitness.

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The only impossible journey is the one you never begin.

—Anthony Robbins

This journey over the last 18 months would not have been possible without the support, guidance, assistance of many people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Mary, for without your support, I would not have been able to take this journey. To my children, Ashley and Edward, thank you for your patience and serving as my motivation to drive on. When life happened, all of you did your piece to allow me to stay focused on my academic endeavor. I am truly thankful and grateful for what each of you has done to allow me to finish this thesis and complete this journey.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

In March 2016, United States military officials declared that Islamic State (IS) also called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the principal benefactor of the largest global convergence of Islamic foreign fighters in history, was on the way to being defeated.[1] The officials stated that the amount of territory under IS control was being reduced, and the number of foreign fighters within IS had declined for the first time since 2014; countless foreign fighters had been killed, while others had become disillusioned and defected to return home or settle elsewhere.[2] Overall, foreign fighter membership in IS had reached a high of roughly 38,000 in early 2015, but was down to approximately 19,000–25,000 as of March 2016.[3]

While a reduction in the territory under IS control coupled with a decrease in the foreign fighter population is a positive development in the fight against IS in Syria and Iraq, this development poses a security question for the United States domestically: what to do with U.S. foreign fighters who leave IS and other foreign fighter groups and sincerely want to return to the United States and reintegrate peacefully, even if they may still believe in the ideas that originally motivated them to become a foreign fighter?

As of November 2016, the United States lacks a national strategy to reintegrate returning ex-foreign fighters. This thesis explores the possibility of reintegrating those foreign fighters who do not harbor any nefarious plans and want to return to the United

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[1] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 6, https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TaskForceFinalReport.pdf; Evan Horowitz, "ISIS Is Losing. Will That Make It More Dangerous?," *Boston Globe,* March 30, 2016, https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/politics/2016/03/30/isis-losing-will-that-make-more-dangerous/cRn9rJl94cZmXHuOkr9hOK/story.html.

[2] Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq," Soufan Group, 2015, 7, http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

[3] "TSG IntelBrief: Foreign Fighters and Those Who Return," Soufan Group, March 9, 2016, http://Soufangroup.com/tsg-intelbrief-foreign-fighters-and-those-who-return/.

States and reintegrate peacefully back into society.[4] The United States must develop a strategy that addresses the needs of returning ex-foreign fighters. Rather than attempt to develop a reintegration strategy from nothing, one option is to leverage existing reintegration programs designed for individuals with similar needs to ex-foreign fighters.

For example, two groups that have existing reintegration programs are U.S. street gangs and the U.S. military, specifically formerly deployed National Guard members.[5] The primary street gang disengagement and reintegration strategy in the United States is the Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model (Comprehensive Gang Model), which is supported by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a multidisciplinary strategy designed to assist gang members leave their gang and reintegrate into society.[6] The principal reintegration strategy for formerly deployed National Guard members is Total Force Fitness (TFF), which is managed by the Department of Defense (DOD). TFF is a multidisciplinary strategy that addresses the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of National Guard members and their families.[7] The DOD works with several organizations to assist National Guard members before, during, and after returning from deployments to reintegrate into their families and society.[8]

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[4] This cohort of foreign fighters, who desire peaceful reintegration back into society, will be referred to as ex-foreign fighters throughout this thesis. A foreign fighter who has left the conflict area but still maintains membership with a foreign fighter group and may be a threat to United States, for this thesis, remains a foreign fighter.

[5] These two groups are not the only ones to meet the criteria, but they demonstrate the greatest similarities in terms of group membership based on a shared common identity, and exposure to violence and/or deployment experiences as a result of membership. The researcher acknowledges that gangs and service members exist in numerous countries, but for this research project and further reference to gangs, street gang members, or military service members means U.S. gangs, U.S. street gang members, and U.S. service members.

[6] "Resources and Tools," National Gang Center, 2016, https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Resources.

[7] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework," CJCSI Directive 3405.01. Washington, DC: Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, September 1, 2011, A-1, http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/3405_01.pdf.

[8] "Popular DOD Resources," Department of Defense, 2016, http://archive.defense.gov/resources/.

A. MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF incorporate social and psychological dynamics that are applicable both to their intended audience and, potentially, to returning ex-foreign fighters. Through an exploration of these reintegration programs and the group members whom they are designed to serve, this thesis will explore the following research question: How can the United States develop an ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy using the existing, analogous models of the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF?

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The U.S. government estimates that IS has successfully recruited foreign fighters from 120 countries.[9] To place this figure in context, the United Nations comprises 193 countries. The vast quantity of countries from which IS has been able to recruit individuals reveals that their message resonates with a diverse population of people and that there are likely multiple motivating factors causing people worldwide to travel and join IS, including the United States. IS is not the only group attracting foreign fighters—especially individuals from the United States and other Western nations—to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq. The Islamic groups al Qaeda (AQ) and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, have recruited even greater numbers of foreign fighters to further their causes.[10] Foreign fighters engaged in the conflict in Syria and Iraq are not strictly limited to Islamic groups; Kurdish groups and Christian militias in the region are also successfully recruiting and utilizing Americans as foreign fighters. Thus, any strategy developed to assimilate, monitor, or otherwise engage returning ex-foreign fighters to the United States must transcend any explicit religion or ideology.

Since 2006, the United States has relied on the *National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel* (NSCTT) to counter the most recent flow of foreign fighters. The NSCTT discusses the U.S. strategy in two sections, referred to within the report as

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[9] Horowitz, "ISIS Is Losing. Will That Make It More Dangerous?"

[10] Michael Jensen, Patrick James, and Herbert Tinsley, "Overview: Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States-Foreign Fighters (PIRUS-FF), " START, 2016, 1, https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/START_PIRUS-FF_InfographicSeries_April2016_0.pdf.

"pillars." Pillar 1 focuses on coordinated U.S. and international partnerships designed to constrain the ability of terrorists to travel.[11] Pillar 2 focuses on restricting or denying terrorists the ability to enter, exit, and travel within the United States.[12] The main limitation of the NSCTT is that it applies only to individuals classified as "known or suspected terrorists" and, thus, fails to account for persons motivated to travel to Syria or Iraq with no pre-existing relationship to a terror organization.[13] Exacerbating this limitation, American and Western foreign fighters diverge from the traditional terrorist and foreign fighter profile: they are younger, there are more females, and as a result they are "less likely to be known by the authorities" than their predecessors.[14]

Despite the existence of the 2006 NSCTT, the number of U.S. and Western persons traveling to Iraq and Syria to become foreign fighters continued to increase into 2015, when the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee established a task force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel.[15] *The Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* reported that as of October 2015, more than 250 Americans had traveled abroad to fight with Islamic State, and more than 85 percent of aspiring American foreign fighters were able to travel abroad while evading law enforcement.[16] The report also stated those traveling to join the conflict were both males and females, and concluded that these foreign fighters threaten the safety of the United States by "strengthening terrorist groups, inciting others back home to conduct attacks, or returning themselves to launch acts of terror."[17] The report concluded that the

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[11] National Counterterrorism Center, *National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel,* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006, 1, https://fas.org/irp/threat/travel.pdf.

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] Ibid., 2.

[14] "The Profile of a Terrorist," Koinonia House, February 16, 2015, https://www.khouse.org/enews_article/2015/2360/print; Rachel Briggs Obe and Tanya Silverman, "Western Foreign Fighters: Innovations in Responding to the Threat," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2014, 6, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/ISDJ2784_Western_foreign_fighters_V7_WEB.pdf.

[15] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel*, 6.

[16] Ibid., 6–15.

[17] Ibid., 13.

United States failed to stop Americans from going abroad to become foreign fighters, and made 32 recommendations to stanch the flow.[18]

Improved information sharing between the United States and Europe was the central theme of the report, as was the need for a central database of foreign fighter names and the prevention of evasive travel techniques.[19] The report also cited the need for countering recruitment and radicalization through countering violent extremism (CVE) programs and other early intervention strategies.[20] In addition, the United States adopted a criminalization strategy to address the threat of foreign fighters, from pre-travel to returning ex-foreign fighters.[21] Title 18 U.S. Code § 2339B—Providing material support or resources to a designated foreign terrorist organization—is the primary charge, whereby the individual himself/herself is the material support.[22] France, the United Kingdom, and other Western nations have adopted similar strategies to stem the flow of foreign fighters, but none of these strategies has proven as successful as originally hoped.[23]

The current strategies that the United States employs to mitigate an ever-growing foreign fighter issue are problematic for several reasons. The first is that NSCTT only addresses countering and limiting terrorist travel, while the *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* is focused on CVE, with specific focus on Islamic individuals. Finally, broad criminalization may "discourage the return of non-threatening foreign fighters, who may be invaluable intelligence sources or

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[18] Ibid. 6.

[19] Ibid., 4.

[20] Ibid., 6.

[21] A returned ex-foreign fighter is an individual who has disengaged and returned to his or her country of origin for the sole purpose of peacefully re-assimilating back into society and does not harbor any nefarious plans, whereas a returned foreign fighter is an individual who still identifies with their foreign fighter group and potentially still poses a threat.

[22] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel,* 6.

[23] "Response to Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Recent Terrorist Attacks In Europe," European Union, December 18, 2015, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/fight-against-terrorism/foreign-fighters/.

tools for de-legitimizing terrorist organizations like al-Qaida and IS."[24] These strategies fail to address or consider the motivating factors behind the radicalization and subsequent travel abroad of the foreign fighter, or why the foreign fighter wants to return.

James Comey, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), has noted that many parallels could be drawn between Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s and the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq, but that Syria and Iraq "offer an order of magnitude far worse in a couple of respects."[25] More foreign fighters have traveled to Syria and Iraq than Afghanistan, primarily because it is easier to get to Syria and Iraq than it was to travel to Afghanistan.[26] From the foreign fighter diaspora that will eventually exit the conflict zone, Director Comey stated that the United States is "determined not to let lines be drawn from Syria [and Iraq] today to a future 9/11."[27] To mitigate the possible threat of returning U.S. ex-foreign fighters and to prevent another 9/11, this thesis explores opportunities to successfully reintegrate returning U.S. ex-foreign fighters back into the United States once U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials have determined that they are not an active threat, regardless of any remaining ideological or religious beliefs.

The United States lacks a strategy for reintegrating ex-foreign fighters for several reasons. As of January 2016, U.S. intelligence estimated that only approximately 250 Americans had traveled to join Islamic foreign fighter groups in Syria and Iraq, while at least 40 of them had returned to the United States.[28] Out of the 40 who returned, only five were arrested by authorities upon their return.[29] The arrest of returning ex-foreign fighters is challenging; many times it is difficult to link individuals to foreign fighter

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[24] Charles Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?," Brookings Institution, 2015, 7, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/En-Fighters-Web.pdf.

[25] Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Managing the Foreign Fighter Threat," Brookings Institution, January 14, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/01/14/managing-the-foreign-fighter-threat/.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel,* 12 -23.

[29] Ibid.

groups and/or criminal activities without an informant or the assistance of foreign intelligence services.[30]

Additionally, there is a difference of opinion on the actual threat that foreign fighters pose upon their return to their country of origin. Thomas Hegghammer writes that most *jihadis* in the West prefer to become foreign fighters rather than conduct attacks in their home countries because traveling abroad to fight in a foreign jihad conflict is seen within the foreign fighter community as more legitimate than conducting domestic attacks.[31] Hegghammer believes that there are two main reasons why foreign jihad is believed to be more legitimate. First, many foreign fighters are motivated to become foreign fighters through propaganda videos geared toward foreign conflicts where they witness foreign fighters engaging in warfare to defend a precise population in conflict zones, such as Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.[32] Second, not all Islamic clerics believe in attacking the West, "whereas almost no clerics question the legitimacy of geographically limited insurgency."[33]

On the contrary, U.S. counterterrorism officials believe that foreign fighters pose a clear and present threat to the United States, and U.S. security worldwide. They believe that all foreign fighters who do return to the United States will be more radicalized than when they departed, and now armed with paramilitary training they will be determined to continue their violent struggles.[34] The FBI also believes that foreign fighters pose a security threat to the United States. During a hearing with the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, Assistant Director for the Federal Bureau of Investigation Michael

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[30] Timothy Holman, "Stuck in the Middle: Why Disrupting Foreign Fighter Mobilisations Is Difficult," Across the Green Mountain, September 14, 2015, https://acrossthegreenmountain.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/stuck-in-the-middle-why-disrupting-foreign-fighter-mobilisations-is-difficult/.

[31] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice Between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 9. doi:10.1017/S0003055412000615 as cited in Timothy Holman, "Belgian and French Foreign Fighters in Iraq 2003–2005: A Comparative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38, no. 8 (2015): 603–610.

[32] Ibid., 8–10.

[33] Ibid., 8.

[34] Brian Michael Jenkins, "When Jihadis Come Marching Home: The Terrorist Threat Posed By Westerners Returning From Syria And Iraq," RAND Corporation, 2014, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE130-1/RAND_PE130-1.pdf.

Steinback stated that the FBI does not have American foreign fighters "under control."[35] He further stated, "the [FBI] is doing the best [it] can. If I were to say that we had it under control, then I would say I know of every single individual traveling. I don't. And I don't know every person there and I don't know everyone coming back. So it's not even close to being under control."[36] Adding to the lack of reintegration strategy for ex-foreign fighters is that academic literature tends to focus on the early stages of their life-cycle, which consists of radicalization and recruitment. There is no rigorous framework exploring the final stages of the ex-foreign fighter life-cycle of disengagement, desistance, and reintegration.

This research shows that there a variety of factors motivate a person to become a foreign fighter, most notably a shared common identity with a group of people that the foreign fighter perceives is facing an existential threat and that they feel they need to defend.[37] Equally important, most foreign fighters who return to their country of origin do so not to conduct attacks.[38] Therefore, there must be a strategy in place for U.S. foreign fighters abroad who decide that they no longer wish to be foreign fighters and sincerely want to reintegrate back into the United States, even if they still believe in the ideas and perceptions that originally motivated them to become foreign fighters.

C.   RESEARCH DESIGN

The following sections will describe the overall strategy that I utilized to answer the previously stated research question. I start by detailing the three groups in this project, explaining why each group was selected. Then the limits of this project are explained, followed by a description of what type of data was utilized. I then explain the type of analysis that was used to examine the data, and finally detail the output of the research.

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[35] "FBI Warns of Intelligence Gap on Foreign Fighters in Syria, Iraq," *Federal Information & News Dispatch,* February 11, 2015. http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1654737797?accountid=12702.

[36] Ibid.

[37] David Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27 no. 3, 457 (2015):6, doi: 10.1080/09546553.2015.1032151.

[38]Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?," 10.

1. Sample and Sample Selection

This research project studies the conceptual life-cycle of Islamic foreign fighters to ascertain the possibility of developing a reintegration strategy for returning U.S. foreign fighters by utilizing existing reintegration programs designed for ex-street gang members and formerly deployed military National Guard members. Data on the exact demographic group—U.S. citizens or residents who joined the conflict zone in Iraq or Syria to fight for IS, but who will return to the United States—is scarce. While we know approximately how many Americans have left the United States and joined IS, it is uncertain how many will return or in what mental or psychological condition they will arrive. As a result of this limitation, for information on the mindset, patterns, and issues surrounding returning foreign fighters, I looked at Islamic foreign fighters as a larger historical group, from Afghanistan in the 1980s and Iraq and Syria from 2003 to 2015. The sample was limited to Islamic foreign fighters because they have been the predominant foreign fighter population since the 1980s and constitute a majority of U.S. foreign fighters as of June 2016.

I first identified characteristics of street gang members and formerly deployed National Guard members and compared them to Islamic foreign fighters to ascertain the similarities of street gangs and National Guard members with foreign fighters. All three groups are made up of mostly of adolescent males, who are part of groups where a shared common identity is a salient aspect, and all three groups use violence as a means to accomplish their objectives. These commonalities allowed for additional exploration of similarities among Islamic foreign fighters, street gang members, and formerly deployed National Guard members.[39] I then delineated the conceptual life-cycle processes of street gang members and formerly deployed National Guard members, and conducted a comparative analysis with Islamic foreign fighters as a group, from radicalization and recruitment to traveling and engaging in conflict(s) to disengagement and reintegration

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[39] Adolescence is defined as "the years between the onset of puberty and the beginning of adulthood…[which] starts roughly between ages 12 and 13 and [traditionally] ends by age 20…[but] may well last into the late 20s," University of Minnesota, "Growing and Developing," and "Adolescence: Developing Independence and Identity," in *Introduction to Psychology*, accessed September 30, 2016, http://open.lib.umn.edu/intropsyc/chapter/6-3-adolescence-developing-independence-and-identity/.

into society. Reintegration programs for ex-street gang members and formerly deployed National Guard members were analyzed for application to returning ex-foreign fighters based on the finding of the comparative analysis, which revealed the potential for leveraging the previously mentioned existing reintegration models to successfully reintegrate U.S. foreign fighters.

Street gangs and formerly deployed National Guard members were selected because of their similarities to foreign fighters and because they have existing reintegration strategies. Street gangs exist in many nations, but the focus of this research project is reintegration of returned U.S. ex-foreign fighters. I therefore limited the comparative sample to U.S. street gang members and the U.S. street gang reintegration model. I chose the street gang model because the transnational groups that foreign fighters are being recruited to join are similar to street gangs in their familial and hierarchical structures. Both groups emphasize the social identity of their members, which makes it crucial to recruitment and retention. Both groups also view membership as a lifetime commitment, and therefore do not tolerate desertion. Street gangs and foreign fighter groups both accept and use violence as a tool to maintain order within the group and against their enemies. I hypothesize that leaving a transnational group or a street gang is equally difficult and that ex-members face similar challenges reintegrating into their original communities.

The second comparative group is the U.S. military, specifically formerly deployed National Guard members. This group was selected because military members get deployed to distant conflict zones to engage in or support combat activities, similar to foreign fighters who self-deploy to foreign conflict zones, join a foreign fighter group, and engage in militaristic activities to support their group. As a result of being in a conflict zone, when formerly deployed National Guard members return home and start the reintegration process, some of them may encounter multiple challenges, including but not limited to, family relationship problems, and mental and physical health problems as a result of being in a conflict zone. For this research project, I am explicitly concerned with the mental health issues that some formerly deployed National Guard members may encounter. I hypothesize, based on the numerous reports and studies of the psychological

effects of war on some National Guard members returning from deployment, that some foreign fighters may suffer similar psychological effects while in a conflict zone. Mental health issues are already acknowledged as one factor affecting the successful reintegration of some formerly deployed National Guard members, and need to be part of any reintegration strategy designed for ex-foreign fighters.

2. Limitations of this Research

The primary limitation of this research project is the inability to test the findings. Another limitation of this research project is that it was designed for U.S. ex-foreign fighters who return to the United States and sincerely want to reintegrate back into society, regardless of any beliefs and ideas they may still possess. It is not designed as a process to reintegrate returning foreign fighters planning any criminal or terrorist activity in support of or as a member of a foreign fighter group.

3. Data Sources

The data for this study came exclusively from secondary sources. While I attempted to use academic journals for data on foreign fighters, I learned that there was little data available, I also had to use news reports, social media information, and blogs because they are the source of the most up-to-date information on foreign fighters. Precise information regarding exact cohorts of foreign fighters is limited and incomplete.

There are three reports that do look at specific cohorts of foreign fighters: the first, *Why Youth Join al-Qaeda*, is based on interviews of 2,032 male foreign fighters who acknowledged association with al-Qaeda. The second report, which is derived from the Sinjar Records, is about foreign fighters who belonged to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) between August 2006 and August 2007 and then the Islamic State of Iraq, which was formed from the merger of AQI and other Iraqi insurgent groups.[40] The last report titled *The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter*

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[40] The Sinjar Records are a group of documents that were recovered by Coalition forces in 2007 "in a raid near Sinjar, along Iraq's Syrian border" as cited in Brian Fishman and Joseph Felter, "A First Look at the Sinjar Records," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2007, 3, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/aqs-foreign-fighters-in-iraq.pdf; Stephen Negus, "Call for Sunni State in Iraq," *Financial Times*, October 15, 2006, https://www.ft.com/content/e239159e-5c6a-11db-9e7e-0000779e2340.

Paper Trail, explicitly reviews Islamic State foreign fighters between early 2013 and late 2014.[41] While all three reports provided limited specific information regarding the cognitive aspects of joining a foreign fighter group, they did provide information on the most predominant foreign fighter groups of the 21st century.

The data sources on street gangs came from secondary scholarly sources and the National Gang Center (NGC), which is supported by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and Bureau of Justice Assistance. The data on National Guard members came from secondary scholarly sources and from U.S. military documents and websites. All of the secondary sources are detailed and explored in depth in the literature review in Chapter II

4.   Type and Mode of Analysis

This study applied the Constant Comparison method to compare the foreign fighter life-cycle to the life-cycle of street gang members and National Guard members' post-deployment. The Constant Comparison method typically consists of four stages: "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category (2) integrating categories and their properties (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory."[42] According to Jane Dye in *Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data*, "This method combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed…[so] as social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories…thus [leading to] hypothesis generation (relationship discovery) [which] begins with the analysis of initial observations."[43] The dataset is "only coded enough to generate, hence, to suggest, theory."[44] The method "is concerned with

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[41] Brian Dodwell, Daniel Milton, and Don Rassler, "The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, April 2016, iv, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Caliphates-Global-Workforce1.pdf.

[42] Ibid., 439.

[43] Jane F. Dye et al., "Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data," *The Qualitative Report* 4 no. 1/2 (January 2000), http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-1/dye.html. Dye, Jane F., Irene M. Schatz, Brian A. Rosenberg, and Susanne T. Coleman

[44] Barney G. Glaser, "The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis," *Social Problems* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1965):438, doi:10.2307/798843.

generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon, e.g., processes."[45] Therefore

> depending as it still does on the skills and sensitivities of the analyst, the constant comparison method is *not* designed (as methods of quantitative analysis are) to guarantee that two analysts working independently with the same data will achieve the same results; it *is* designed to allow, with discipline, for some of the vagueness and flexibility which aid the creative generation of theory.[46]

The two independent control groups in this study are street gang members and formerly deployed National Guard members. I deconstructed the conceptual life-cycle of each group independent of the other into three categories—joining their group, supporting their group, and disengaging and desisting from the group—and reintegration. As Ian Dey writes in *Qualitative Data Analysis*, "categories must have two aspects, an internal aspect—they must be meaningful in relation to the data—and an external aspect— they must be meaningful in relation to the other categories."[47]

Then, using the deconstructed life-cycle parts of joining the group, experiences and activities in support of the group, and disengagement and desistance from the group as independent frameworks, the conceptual life-cycle of foreign fighters was mapped. Once the conceptual life-cycle of foreign fighters was mapped for comparative analysis, the primary reintegration strategy for each control group was analyzed using the framework from each control group respectively, to assess the applicability of using the existing reintegration models for foreign fighters. The working hypothesis was that individuals who are similarly categorized have the propensity to continue on comparable trajectories and therefore could be equally responsive to similar reintegration strategies.

5. Output

The output of this research project is two-fold. The first is a greater understanding of the conceptual life-cycle process(es) of foreign fighters. The second reveals an

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ian Dey, "Qualitative Data Analysis," Classmatandread.com, 103, accessed February 7, 2016, http://www.classmatandread.net/class/785wk3/Qualitative_data_analysis.pdf .

opportunity to leverage two existing reintegration strategies to reintegrate returning U.S. ex-foreign fighters, when the current strategy of criminalization is not most prudent.

Successful reintegration of ex-foreign fighters strengthens the United States in multiple ways. The first is that it promotes a deeper relationship with the communities from which foreign fighters originate and eventually return, by making them part of the solution. Equally important is that reintegrated ex-foreign fighters could serve as keystones to the counter-narratives needed to prevent violent extremism and future foreign fighters.[48] It also supports and possibly enhances the current strategies outlined in the 2006 NSCTT and the *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel* by allowing law enforcement, military, and intelligence agencies to focus their resources on actual terrorists and individuals who pose a threat to the United States. Lastly, by offering a reintegration opportunity and establishing a positive relationship with a returned ex-foreign fighter, the homeland security enterprise may gain a clearer understanding of what motivates foreign fighter recruits to travel and join foreign fighter groups, enabling more targeted and effective counter-foreign fighter strategies.

D.   THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is divided into six chapters, including this introduction.

Chapter II consists of a literature review that explores variation in definitions of foreign fighters between the U.S. government and various academics. The literature review then covers the scope of the foreign fighter phenomenon, the role of identity in radicalization and recruitment of a foreign fighter, the threat of returning foreign fighters to the United States, and conceptual paths that foreign fighters take when they disengage from their foreign fighter groups. This section also details the current reintegration strategies for ex-gang members and formerly deployed National Guard members.

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[48] "Developing Effective Counter-Narrative Frameworks for Countering Violent Extremism," International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague, September 2014, 3, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Developing%20Effective%20Frameworks%20for%20CVE-Hedayah_ICCT%20Report.pdf.

Chapter III is a primer on social identity and the accepted use of violence by foreign fighter groups, street gangs, and the military. This section details the conceptual similarities of all three groups when viewed through the dual lenses of social identity and group-sanctioned violence.

Chapter IV deconstructs the conceptual life-cycle of street gang members into three parts: joining the gang (group), supporting their gang, and disengaging and desisting from the gang. Using the deconstructed conceptual life-cycle of street gang members as a framework, the conceptual life-cycle of Islamic foreign fighters is detailed. Similarities are observed between group members in the cognitive process that members go through when joining and exiting their groups.

Chapter V deconstructs the conceptual life-cycle of National Guard members: from joining the military to experiences and activities during combat deployment to detachment from the military. Using the deconstructed conceptual life-cycle of formerly deployed National Guard members as a framework, the conceptual life-cycle of Islamic foreign fighters is detailed. A comparison of members from both groups reveals that members have similar experiences and partake in similar activities while abroad.

Chapter VI reviews the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF reintegration programs. Then, based on the findings regarding the similar cognitive process that foreign fighters and street gang members progress through to join and depart their groups, and the findings regarding the similar experiences and activities that foreign fighters and National Guard members partake while deployed abroad, I structure a multidisciplinary reintegration model for returning ex-foreign fighters using components from the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research on foreign fighters is relatively new and jihad-centric. One reason, according to Thomas Hegghammer, is that of the 20 documented conflicts involving foreign fighters, only three conflicts, "Afghanistan in the 1980s, Iraq after 2003, and Syria/Iraq after 2011, [have involved] more than 4,000 foreign fighters."[49] Another reason is that the events of 9/11, perpetrated by al Qaeda—a group of foreign fighters who originally traveled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets in 1980s—was a highly publicized event. David Malet explains that there is a common perception of most foreign fighters as Islamic jihadists, "because of their connection to the post-9/11 international campaign against al Qaeda affiliates and later against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria."[50] Lastly, because of the disparity in conflicts involving foreign fighters, there is no common definition.

The following literature review, amid these limitations, examines the quantity of foreign fighters in the Middle East. Specifically, what constitutes a foreign fighter, the identity and radicalization of foreign fighters, historical perspective from previous *mujahedeen* and Iraq post-2003 foreign fighter cohorts after they disengaged from their respective conflicts, documentation on specific cohorts of foreign fighters, the U.S. street gang reintegration and National Guard post-deployment reintegration models, and the U.S. strategy for dealing with foreign fighters.

A. THE SCOPE OF THE FOREIGN FIGHTER PROBLEM

Literature estimating the total number of foreign fighters as of mid-2016 is relatively consistent as far as numbers are concerned. For the purpose of this study, the general consensus among intelligence reports and academics of several thousand foreign fighters will suffice. A 2015 U.S. Homeland Security Committee report, which bases its

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[49] Thomas Hegghammer. "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and Globalization of Jihad," *International Security* 35 no. 3 (Winter 2010/11): 60, as referenced in Daniel Byman, "The Homecomings: What Happens When Arab Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria Return?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 38, no. 8 (2015):583, doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2015.1031556.

[50] Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization," 454.

numbers on classified and unclassified U.S. intelligence reports, states that in 2013, when the number of foreign fighters traveling to the Middle East was steadily increasing, approximately 2,000 of the fighters were from Western nations.[51]

Then in June 2014, after ISIS declared the caliphate, the number of foreign fighters exploded. Foreign fighters were reported to be flocking to the caliphate from an even greater number of countries than was reported in 2013, and U.S. officials estimate that the number of foreign fighters joining the conflict almost doubled.[52] While the overall numbers of foreign fighters surged, so did the number of foreign fighters from Western nations, including approximately "3,000 with European or other Western passports…and as many as 100 with U.S. passports."[53] To place the number of foreign fighters into context, there were more Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq in 2014 than there were in Afghanistan in the 1980s during their conflict with the Soviet Union or in Somalia following Ethiopia's invasion.[54]

B.   DEFINING A FOREIGN FIGHTER

The term "foreign fighter" is derived from the Afghanistan and Russian conflict of the 1980s. At the start of that conflict, Western governments were encouraging a jihad in Afghanistan. A "jihad," as defined by the Islamic Supreme Council of America, is a concept that can be used to summon Muslims to protect fellow Muslims who are being attacked or persecuted for their belief.[55] Western governments were therefore calling for Muslim men worldwide to travel to Afghanistan and fight the Russians, as a proxy

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[51] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel,* 13.

[52] Ibid., 10.

[53] Brian Bennett and Richard A. Serrano, "More Western Fighters Joining Militants in Iraq and Syria," *Los Angeles Times,* July 19, 2014, http://touch.latimes.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-80851081/.

[54] Jenkins, "When Jihadis Come Marching Home," 15.

[55] "Jihad: A Misunderstood Concept from Islam—What Jihad Is, and Is Not," Islamic Supreme Council of America, accessed March 2, 2016, http://islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/legal-rulings/5-jihad-a-misunderstood-concept-from-islam.html?start=9.

Western army.[56] In late-1990s, al Qaeda altered the meaning of "jihad" by claiming that the United States was an enemy of Islam and declaring that all devout Muslims should attack the United States in any way they can, to defend fellow Muslims.[57] The successful attacks on two U.S. embassies in Africa and 9/11, solidified the new meaning of jihad.[58] The U.S. Congress, in its September 2015 *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel*, defines foreign fighters as "individuals who leave home, travel abroad to terrorist safe havens, and join or assist violent extremist groups."[59] Similarly terrorist-focused, the U.S. military uses the term "foreign fighters in press releases to describe al Qaeda and allied terror groups from outside of Afghanistan" engaged in the combat zone.[60]

Academics take a more functional view in classifying foreign fighters: Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, in a study of Chechnya, define foreign fighters as "non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants" inspired to join conflicts to defend and/or protect their religion, ideology and/or kinship, rather than being motivated by financial gain.[61] David Malet defines foreign fighters as "non-citizens of conflict states" who join insurgent groups to protect and/or defend a "transnational identity community" during civil conflicts.[62] Ian Bryan, differentiating government agents from other citizens, describes foreign fighters as "not agents of foreign governments," but rather foreigners who join armed conflicts to fight for a "transnational cause or identity."[63] Thomas

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[56] Afzal Ashraf, "Foreign Fighters: Foreign to Whom?" *Al Jazeera,* October 27, 2014, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/foreign-fighters-foreign-whom-201410268380651831.html.

[57] Daniel L. Bynam, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets," Brookings Institution, April 29, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Homeland Security Committee, *Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel,* 8.

[60] Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization," 457.

[61] Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya: A Critical Assessment," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31no. 5 (2008): 421, doi: 10.1080/10576100801993347.

[62] Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization," 456.

[63] Ian Bryan, "Sovereignty and the Foreign Fighter Problem," *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs* 54, no. 1 (2010): 120, doi: 10.1016/j.orbis.2009.10.008.

Hegghammer simply defines a foreign fighter as "someone who leaves or tries to leave the West to fight somewhere else."[64] John Deni writes that "foreign fighter" is a designation assigned to non-native "individuals who choose to engage in insurgent military operations in foreign conflict zones without the promise of any financial remuneration."[65] Frank Cilluffo, Jeffrey Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp classify Western foreign fighters as violent Muslim extremists who travel to jihadi conflict areas with the goal of training and fighting against non-Muslim groups.[66] John Venhaus defines a foreign fighter as "nonindigenous, nonterritorialized combatants who left the relative safety of home to participate in a conflict primarily against the United States and its allies."[67] This definition intentionally excludes all local fighters and fighters with ethno-nationalistic ties.[68]

Barak Mendelsohn explains that not all foreign fighters are alike; he notes that "analysts often ignore the different levels of 'foreignness.'"[69] One example is in Somalia, where a majority of the foreign fighters actually come from Somali diaspora. According to Mendelsohn, "of the over 1,000 fighters with foreign passport fighting for Al Shabaab, only perhaps 200 to 300 were not of Somali heritage."[70]

The diversity of definitions reflects the variety of individuals who engage in foreign conflicts. A majority of the aforementioned scholars believes that to be classified a foreign fighter, the individual can be neither a citizen of nor indigenous to the area prior to the conflict. An example was in Iraq in 2003 when thousands of Iraqi diaspora returned to Iraq from Jordan to fight the United States. These returning Iraqi fighters are not

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[64] Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?," 1.

[65] John R. Deni, "Beyond Information Sharing: NATO and the Foreign Fighter Threat," *Parameters* 45, no. 2 (2015): 49, http://search.proquest.com/docview/1711519128?accountid=12702.

[66] Frank Cilluffo, Jeffrey Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp, "Foreign Fighters: Trends, Trajectories and Conflict Zones," George Washington University, Homeland Security Policy Institute, 2010, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:380558/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

[67] John M. Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," United States Institute of Peace, May 2010, 3, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Byman, "The Homecomings," 583.

[70] Ibid., 584.

foreign fighters, rather individuals that are returning to defend their homeland. One returning Iraqi stated that he returned to Iraq to defend his country, "which has been occupied by invaders."[71] The actions of the individual must be related to some type of insurgency, whether a national civil conflict or in defense of transnational identity, such as religion, kinship and/or identity. For this study, these consensus parameters suffice: 1) non-citizen/non-indigenous and 2) join an insurgency.

C.   GROUP-SPECIFIC FOREIGN FIGHTER INFORMATION

Literature regarding exact cohorts of foreign fighters is limited and incomplete. Three reports do focus on specific cohorts of foreign fighters: the first, *Why Youth Join al-Qaeda,* contains an analysis of interviews with 2,032 male foreign fighters who acknowledged association with al-Qaeda. The second report, *A First Look at the Sinjar Records*, examines foreign fighters who belonged to al-Qaeda in Iraq between August 2006 and August 2007.[72] The Sinjar Records were recovered "in a raid near Sinjar, along Iraq's Syrian border."[73] The last report, titled *The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail*, studies Islamic State foreign fighters between early 2013 and late 2014.[74] An Islamic State defector smuggled out the documents, which were eventually turned over to the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point for review, translation, and analysis.

Why Youth Join al-Qaeda conducts an analysis of interviews with 2,032 male foreign fighters who "professed an association with al Qaeda or another global extremist movement whose objectives were not limited to local issues."[75] The author used interview transcripts from foreign fighters who had been captured by Coalition forces, in conjunction with information from the Sinjar Records and open-source information about

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[71] "Iraqi Diaspora Returns to Battle U.S. Forces," Deutsche Welle, 2016, http://www.dw.com/en/iraqi-diaspora-returns-to-battle-us-forces/a-822289.

[72] Negus, "Call for Sunni State in Iraq."

[73] Fishman and Felter, "A First Look at the Sinjar Records," 3.

[74] Dodwell, Milton, and Rassler, "The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail," iv.

[75] Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 4–34.

the detainees to complete the report.[76] Of particular interest to this research project, the Sinjar Records reveal that the average age of foreign fighters entering Iraq was 24–25 years old and that many "arrived with a group from their hometown, suggesting that al-Qa'ida's recruiters try to attract groups of friends simultaneously."[77] Also, a majority of fighters whose occupations were listed indicated that before traveling to Iraq, they were students, highlighting the role of social institutions like universities, in recruiting foreign fighters.[78]

The report concludes that al-Qaeda foreign fighters "make a mental transition so that distant events seem so personal and so egregious that they are compelled to join someone else's fight."[79] Al-Qaeda propagates a message that Islam is facing an existential threat from a monolithic enemy.[80] Al-Qaeda presents itself as the vehicle for the *umma*, or community of the faithful, to take action and defend Islam, soliciting faithful Muslims to self-select and join their group.[81] The report identifies four types of al-Qaeda recruits, which it refers to as "Seekers." They are the Revenge Seeker, Status Seeker, Identity Seeker, and Thrill Seeker.[82] The different types of Seekers show that individuals are motivated to become foreign fighters for different reasons. It could also mean that foreign fighters will leave their foreign fighter groups for different reasons, requiring a multifaceted reintegration strategy to support the possible various motives.

In April 2016 the CTC produced a report titled *The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail.* The CTC analyzed "4,600 unique Islamic State personnel records that were produced by the group primarily between early 2013 and late 2014."[83] The IS records were provided to the CTC

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., 28.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid., 6.

[81] Ibid., 7.

[82] Ibid., 11.

[83] Dodwell, Milton, and Rassler, "The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail," iv.

by NBC News, which acquired the documents from an IS defector.[84] Based on the recovered documents, the report concluded the following: foreign fighters from 70 countries were represented, the level of skill and experience among them was very diverse, and the group represented in the documents appeared to be "well-educated compared to educational levels in their home countries." Occupational skills on the other hand were primarily composed of lower-skilled positions, and that "approximately 10 percent had previous jihad experience, primarily in Syria, Libya, and Afghanistan."[85] The report found that the average age of the foreign fighters, according to the recovered documents, was 26–27 years old, and revealed that 89 percent of Western foreign fighters had high school or post-high school, university or college education, compared with 76 percent of the non-Western foreign fighters.[86]

D.   FOREIGN FIGHTER DISENGAGEMENT

Literature is sparse regarding the path foreign fighters take after exiting their foreign fighter groups. According to Mohammed Hafez, some of the *mujahideen* that departed Afghanistan after withdrawal of the Soviet Union military returned to their countries to lead normal lives, and were revered as heroes.[87] Other foreign fighters were used as soldiers by their government or traveled to other conflict zones. Some returned to their home countries and "posed significant dangers."[88] "In Saudi Arabia, those [foreign fighters] that had 'retired' after fighting in the 1990s in Afghanistan were later mobilized by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) when it began attacks in the Kingdom in 2003."[89] Foreign fighters who traveled to Iraq post-2003 did not return home as heroes or to serve in their national military. Many foreign fighters died as a result of "fighting

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., 14–16.

[87] Byman, "The Homecomings," 584.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., 585.

American and other coalition forces on the ground, [or]…they were often used as suicide operatives."[90]

According to a report by the Brookings Institution, "some foreign fighters will become disillusioned by the conflict, its dynamics, or their individual experience, thereby deciding—often at considerable personal risk—to defect and head home."[91] A report issued by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence (ICSR), based on 58 IS foreign fighters who defected and spoke publicly about their membership within the group and defection, identified four narratives within the cohort that motivated them to defect. They were: infighting within the local Sunni Muslim population, brutality against (Sunni) Muslims within and outside of the IS, corruption and un-Islamic behaviors among commanders and leaders of the IS, and quality of life issues to do with living conditions within the proclaimed caliphate.[92] The ICSR report recommends that nations acknowledge the reasons why defectors disengage from ISIS, and offer them opportunities to reintegrate back into society so they are comfortable to go public with the realities of being a foreign fighter.[93] The Brookings Institution report states that receiving nations such as the United States should "require individual assessments in which motives for leaving and returning" are understood and explored.[94]

E.   EXISTING REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS

Street gangs and the National Guard each have existing reintegration programs for those individuals that are/were members and want to successfully reintegrate back into

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[90] Dafna Rand and Anthony Vassalo, "Bringing the Fight Back Home: Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria," Center for a New American Security, August 2014, 2, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/bringing-the-fight-back-home-western-foreign-fighters-in-iraq-and-syria. Thus far, a majority of the foreign fighters who have joined IS or another contemporary jihadist group have not suffered the same fate, yet with IS being defeated they may change their strategies and tactics; Ibid.

[91] Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?," 8.

[92] Peter R. Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors," International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, 2015, http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ICSR-Report-Victims-Perpertrators-Assets-The-Narratives-of-Islamic-State-Defectors.pdf.

[93] Ibid., 14.

[94] Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?," 8.

society. The following sections explore gang disengagement and reintegration and National Guard post-deployment reintegration.

1.   Gang Disengagement and Reintegration

The literature regarding gang disengagement and reintegration is vast but consistent as to the various processes of gang member disengagement, which the literature refers to as "desistance." Desistance can occur in two distinct manners: the gang member simply quits the gang abruptly or engages in a withdrawal process eventually ending in desistance.[95] The manner in which gang members leave is important because it may affect their ability to successfully reintegrate back into society. According to Scott Decker, a leading academic in gangs, violence, and the offender's perspective, gang members who abruptly quit may have an increased likelihood of successfully reintegrating back into society. Decker's research indicates that ex-gang members who do not maintain contact or associate with any of their former gang members, eliminate the external pressure of returning to the gang.[96] Gang members who gradually exit the gang may still maintain association with members of the gang, which may hinder their ability to completely disengage and successfully reintegrate back into society and not return to gang life.[97] Because of the divergent ways in which gang members may disengage from their gang, successful desistance programs must account for the variance.

The National Gang Center provides information for community organizations and law enforcement to prevent or reduce gang membership and/or activity and assist gang members in leaving their gang and reintegrating back into society. One strategy from the NGC is the Gang Intervention and Desistance strategy. The strategy is based on an understanding that individuals are attracted to and join gangs through a dual process of "push and pull."[98] The premise is that individuals are "pushed" to the join a gang through

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[95] David C. Pyrooz, Scott H Decker, and Vincent Webb, "The Ties That Bind: Desistance from Gangs," *Crime and Delinquency* 60, no. 4 (2010): 3. doi:10.1177/001128710372191.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Michelle Arciaga Young and Victor Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," *National Gang Center Bulletin* No. 8 (January 2013): 1, https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Getting-Out-Staying-Out.pdf.

negative social conditions such as "poverty, family problems, and lack of success in school."[99] Occurring relatively simultaneously is the "pull"—the perceived benefits that gang membership will provide the individual, such as "safety/protection, love and support, excitement, financial opportunities, and a sense of belonging."[100]

Working with the understanding that both processes contribute to the gang membership, the NGC studied the mechanisms that enabled individuals to leave gangs (desistance) and reintegrate into society. The NGC issued a bulletin that stated, based on their findings, that successful gang desistance required both push-and-pull factors.[101] The report noted that the push factors "make persistence in that social environment [gang membership] unappealing, [the social conditions associated with gang membership] are viewed as 'pushing' the individual away from the gang."[102] Coupled with the push factors are the pull factors or "the circumstances or situations that attract [gang members] to alternative routes…toward new activities and pathways."[103] The NGC also noted that in addition to push-and-pull factors, the motivation of an individual gang member to leave his or her gang was related to how long the individual was an actual gang member, and how "established and severe the level of gang activity was in the community."[104]

Based on the finding of the NGC, the Comprehensive Gang Model is designed to address and support both the push-and-pull factors through five core strategies: community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression, and organizational change and development.[105] The five strategies are designed to be used in

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Scott H. Decker, and Barrik van Winkle, *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); as referenced in Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 1.

[101] Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 1.

[102] David C. Pyrooz and Scott H. Decker, "Motives and Methods for Leaving the Gang: Understanding the Process of Gang Desistance," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 39, no. 5 (September–October 2011): 417–425, as referenced in Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 2.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 1.

[105] "OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Planning for Implementation," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2009, 5, https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Implementation-Manual/Implementation-Manual.pdf.

concert to address the previously mentioned push-and-pull factors that lead individuals to join gangs as well as aid gang members in disengaging from their gang. There are several other gang member reintegration programs based on the Comprehensive Gang Strategy, such as Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California,[106] and Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development (BUILD) in Chicago, Illinois.[107]

2. National Guard Post-deployment Reintegration

Literature regarding military National Guard member post-deployment reintegration strategies acknowledges that formerly deployed National Guard members face various challenges during the reintegration at home, including employment and financial problems, family relationship difficulties, and the transition from military to civilian life while still a member of the National Guard.[108] In addition, mental and physical health issues are also common challenges encountered by formerly deployed National Guard members.[109] For this thesis, I am primarily concerned with the literature regarding the mental and physical health issues reported by formerly deployed National Guard members. All National Guard members are exposed to and experience various stressors while deployed. When these stressors exceed a certain threshold for some members, they may manifest as mental or physical health issues, which directly affect the ability of the National Guard member to smoothly reintegrate back into society.[110] A 2010 study titled "Prevalence of Mental Health Problems and Functional Impairment among Active Component and National Guard Soldiers 3 and 12 Months Following Combat in Iraq" found that between 23.2 percent and 31.1 percent of formerly deployed

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[106] Cindy Y. Rodriquez and Jaqueline Hurtado, "Homeboy Industries' Business Model: A Way Out of Gang Life," CNN, accessed March 30, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/23/us/gang-rehabilitation-program/.

[107] "Build," Buildchicago, accessed April 15, 2016, http://www.buildchicago.org/.

[108] Megan Hazle, Sherrie L. Wilcox, and Anthony M. Hassan, "Helping Veterans and Their Families Fight On!," *Advances in Social Work* 17, no.1 (2016): 230, https://journals.iupui.edu/index.php/advancesinsocialwork/article/view/2051.

[109] Sherrie L. Wilcox et al., "A Scope of the Problem: Post-Deployment Reintegration Challenges in a National Guard Unit," IOS Press Work 50, 2015, 74, doi:10.3233/Wor-141935. Wilcox, Sherrie L., Hyunsung Oh, Sarah A. Redmond, Joseph Chicas, Anthony M. Hassan, Pey-Jiuan Lee, Kathleen Ell.

[110] Lisa A. Brenner et al., "Soldiers Returning from Deployment: A Qualitative Study Regarding Expose, Coping, and Reintegration," *Rehabilitation Psychology* (2015): 2, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rep0000048. Lisa Betthauser, Nazanin Bahraini, Jaimie Lusk, Heidi Terrio, Ann Scher, and Karen Schwab,

service members, including National Guard members, reported a mental health problem.[111] The literature also shows that mental health issues increase during the first several months after service members return from deployment.[112]

As a result of both physical and emotional stressors, some formerly deployed National Guard members are diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and post-deployment multi-symptom disorder (PMD).[113] TBI is diagnosed when an individual, or service member in this case, experiences "an external physical force that resulted in a traumatically induced structural injury to the brain or a physiological disruption of brain function, as indicated by medical findings or an acute loss of or alteration in consciousness."[114] PTSD is a "mental health condition that is triggered by a terrifying event—either experiencing it or witnessing it, where an individual experiences flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event."[115] PMD, as its name suggests, is a multi-symptom disorder "that includes, but is not limited to the following symptoms: sleep disturbance, low frustration tolerance/irritability, cognitive problems, fatigue, headaches, chronic pain, affective disturbance, apathy, personality change, substance misuse, psychosocial difficulties, and hypervigilance," in addition to PTSD and TBI.[116]

The rate and severity of the TBI, PTSD, or PMD diagnosis vary, as are the result of several factors directly associated with the service members' level of combat engagement and/or their pre-deployment condition.[117] Pre-deployment conditions could

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[111] Jeffrey L. Thomas et al., "Prevalence of Mental Health Problems And Functional Impairment Among Active Component and National Guard Soldiers 3 And 12 Months Following Combat In Iraq," *Archives of General Psychiatry,* 67 (2010):614, doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2010.54. Jeffrey L. Thomas, Joshua E. Wilk, Lyndon A. Riviere, Dennis McGurk, Carl A. Castro, Charles W. Hoge

[112] Maurice L. Sipos et al., "Assessment of an Alternative Postdeployment Reintegration Strategy With Soldiers Returning From Iraq," *Psychological Services*, 11, no. 2 (2014): 185, doi: 10.1037/ a0033308. Sipos, Maurice L., Heather M. Foran, Michael D. Wood, Kathleen M. Wright, Vincent J. Barnhart, Amy Adler, and Lyndon Riviere,

[113] Brenner et al., "Soldiers Returning From Deployment," 2.

[114] Ibid.

[115] "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)," Mayo Clinic, 2016, http://www.mayoclinic.org/ diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/basics/definition/con-20022540.

[116] Brenner et al., "Soldiers Returning From Deployment," 2.

[117] Ibid.

be "neurogenetics, neurodevelopment, premorbid intellectual function, medical, neurological, psychiatric, and substance abuse conditions."[118] The reintegration process is complicated by these factors and by the psychological challenges of transitioning from living in a highly controlled conflict zone back to living in civilian society.[119] Adding to these complications is the fact that approximately 800,000 service members have deployed more than once to Afghanistan and/or Iraq.[120]

To address the increasing psychological issues observed in formerly deployed service members, to include National Guard members after Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, in addition to the normal challenges associated with reintegrating after a combat deployment, the Department of Defense (DOD) uses a Total Force Fitness (TFF) concept for their formerly deployed service member reintegration strategies.[121] The TFF is a conceptual framework that uses a "four mind domain": (1) psychological (2) behavioral (3) social, and (4) spiritual fitness.[122] The DOD TFF framework is based on the belief that there is an interrelationship and interdependence of these domains. The DOD TFF reintegration strategy operates on the premise that to effectively address any single issue of a formerly deployed National Guard member, or any other formerly deployed service member, all four domains must be addressed and nurtured.[123] The DOD TFF applies to all formerly deployed service members. This includes National Guard members who do not report any psychological or physical damage as well as members who do.

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Amy Adler et al., "Effect of transition home from combat on the risk-taking and health-related behaviors," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 24 (2011), doi: 10.1002/jts.20665, as referenced in Sipos et al., "Assessment of an Alternative Postdeployment Reintegration Strategy With Soldiers Returning From Iraq," 185.

[120] Steven J. Danish and Bradley J. Antonides, "The Challenges of Reintegration for Service Members and Their Families," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 83, no. 4 (2013): 550, doi:10.1111/ ajop.12054.

[121] Wayne B. Jonas et al., "Why Total Force Fitness?," *Military Medicine,* 175, no. 8 (2010): 6, http://www.samueliinstitute.org/File%20Library/Knowledge%20Center/Publications/Jonas%20et%20al-WhyTFF.pdf. Wayne B. Jonas, Francis G. O'Connor, Patricia Deuster, Jonathan Peck, Caron Shake, Stephen S. Frost

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

F.   CONCLUSION

The literature shows that the number of foreign fighters in the Iraq/Syria region of the Middle East is large by anyone's measurement. Adding to the concern for the United States is the reality that at least 250 Americans with U.S. passports may return to the United States with nefarious intentions.[124] To counter the threat of foreign fighters, the United States had originally relied on the 2006 NSCTT, which primarily focused on limiting or prohibiting the travel of known or suspected terrorists.[125] The 2016 U.S. strategy is based on four parts:

1.   Criminalize preparatory acts of terrorism.

2.   Continue to utilize law enforcement to address the threat of foreign fighters.

3.   Increase information sharing among nations regarding foreign fighter travel.

4.   Emphasize community engagement to prevent individuals from being radicalized and recruited to travel overseas to fight.[126]

The literature does not contain evidence of programs that screen returning foreign fighters to determine their actual threat to the United States, and there does not appear to be any societal reintegration programs for returning ex-foreign fighters. The sole U.S. strategy is criminalization of returning foreign fighters. This could actually be stimulating foreign fighters to engage in terrorism or violent extremism, according to the findings of Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, who argue that criminalization is akin to a new post-9/11 "security environment… [where] the attendant security discourse helps feed the conspiratorial narrative that the war on terrorism is actually a war on Muslims," which could fuel the radicalization or re-radicalization of returning ex-foreign fighters.[127]

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[124] Bennett and Serrano, "More Western Fighters Joining Militants in Iraq and Syria."

[125] National Counterterrorism Center, *National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel,* 1.

[126] "Attorney General Holder Urges International Effort to Confront Threat of Syrian Foreign Fighters; During Visit to Norway, Attorney General Outlines Law Enforcement Approaches to Countering Violent Extremism." M2 Presswire, July 8, 2014, http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1543462057?accountid=12702.

[127] Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38:11 (2015):963. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2015.1051375.

The ICSR recommends that nations develop reintegration programs based on the motivating factors that caused the foreign fighter to defect, but it does not discuss how such a strategy should be implemented. The Brookings Institution report predicts that foreign fighters will eventually leave their groups, and urges nations including the United States to "require individual assessments in which motives for leaving and returning" are explored prior to allowing any returning ex-foreign fighters freely into the country.[128]

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[128] Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters: Criminalization or Reintegration?," 8.

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III.   SOCIAL IDENTITY AND GROUP VIOLENCE

The identity of group members and the social norms associated with that identity, specifically the acceptable use of violence in support of the group, are two areas that are deeply entrenched in the dynamics of foreign fighters, gang members, and National Guard members. The purpose of this chapter is to establish an initial framework by which to understand individual and group dynamics of group membership, and the mental process of accepting the social norms associated with specific group membership.

A.   SOCIAL IDENTITY

Social identity is how an individual perceives that he or she relates or belongs to one social group more than another. It is based on the relationship between an individual and a group rather than any specific attribute.[129] For example, nationality and ethnicity only possess meaning because they connect people socially.[130] The different categories that American Muslims classify themselves demonstrate the polylithic nature of identity. According to a 2011 Pew Research report, American Muslims reported they belonged to different races, different socio-economic classes, different ethnicities, and even different political groups.[131]

The process of self-identification is intuitive among all humans from early childhood, when children are exploring who they are and to what groups they belong.[132] The groups to which individuals perceive themselves as belonging, based on an identity, are that individual's "in-group."[133] With the establishment of an in-group, there is also the establishment of a group with which the individual does not identify, the "out-group."

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[129] David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity In Civil Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20.

[130] Ibid.

[131] "Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism," Pew Research Center, August 30, 2011, http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/.

[132] University of Minnesota, "Growing and Developing" and "Adolescence: Developing Independence and Identity."

[133] Ibid., 66.

An example is found in American Muslims; they identify all Americans as part of their national in-group, but when their in-group is framed through their religious identity, they only view fellow Muslims as their in-group, and anyone of a different religion, to include fellow Americans, as the out-group.

As identity is a pluralistic concept, "individuals constantly engage in a process of self-evaluation redefining their identity and therefore their in-group [and outgroup]."[134] The process of constant evaluation of self-identity is also predicated on individuals searching for an identity that provides "a satisfactory concept or image of [themselves]."[135] Identifying as a member of a group provides individuals with a sense of pride, self-esteem, and such perceived or actual benefits as "acceptance, belonging, and social support, as well as a system of roles, rules, norms, values, and beliefs to guide behavior."[136] An example is the Salat, the Muslim prayers performed five times daily. The Salat is over 1400 years old and serves as a universal ritual performed by all Muslims worldwide, regardless of nationality or ethnicity.[137] Performing the Salat reinforces Islamic pride and Islamic commitment by all Muslims; it also connects living Muslims to Muslims that have died, by serving as an enduring ritual that all Muslims have performed throughout Islamic history.[138]

Underpinning the motivation of people to travel from their country of residence to engage in a faraway conflict with a group of people they do not know, or know very distantly, is a shared salient identity with the group.[139] Identity may take many forms, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race.[140] From this identity, individuals are

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[134] Ibid., 67.

[135] Ibid., 68.

[136] Walter Stephan, Oscar Ybarra, and Kimberly R. Morrison, "Intergroup Threat Theory," University of Michigan, 2, accessed July 5, 2016, https://oscarybarra.psych.lsa.umich.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1Stephan-Ybarra-_RiosMorrisonInPressHandbookCh.pdf.

[137] "Salat: Daily Prayers," BBC, 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/practices/salat.shtml

[138] Ibid.

[139] Rand Borum and Robert Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38, no. 11, 2016, 3, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2016.1188535.

[140] Ibid.

motivated to defend or support a group with whom they share a common identity.[141] Randy Borum and Robert Fein write that a shared salient identity is what differentiates foreign fighters from compatriots who do not go abroad to join a foreign fighter group. Borum and Fein also believe that loyalty, which is a "person's sense of fidelity, commitment, or obligation to a broader community of people with whom he identifies" is at the root of foreign fighter motivations.[142]

B. SOCIAL IDENTITY WITHIN FOREIGN FIGHTER GROUPS, STREET GANGS, AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

Identity—and motivation—also contribute to the radicalization of the foreign fighters.[143] According to Mohammed Hafez and Creighton Mullins, "radicalization involves adapting an extremist worldview, one that is rejected by mainstream society and one that deems legitimate the use of violence."[144] Interestingly, Hafez and Mullins differentiate radicalization from violent extremism and terrorism, stating that "the former entails a cognitive dimension of adopting an extremist worldview that accepts the legitimacy of the use of violence…while the latter entails [an] additional behavioral dimension."[145] They believe a combination of factors influences whether radicalized foreign fighters adopt the behavioral aspect of terrorism or violent extremism, most prominently, "grievances, networks [between individuals with] preexisting kinship and friendship ties, ideologies regarding an individual's identity and their place in the world, and possessing enabling environments and support structures…to deepen their commitment to radical milieus."[146]

For contemporary foreign fighters, religion has been the salient identity that has motivated individuals to depart their countries of origin and travel to distant conflict areas to fight for and defend their in-group. Transnational foreign fighter recruitment is based

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[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Jenkins, "When Jihadis Come Marching Home," 1.

[144] Hafez and Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle," 960.

[145] Ibid., 961.

[146] Ibid.

on "duty and defense…of an ideological faction."[147] Foreign fighters join their groups and engage in activities with the purpose of defending their group from an existential threat.[148] Both diaspora Muslims and Christians have traveled to the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq to support and defend their in-group.

The dynamic has formed a regular part of recent conflicts, particularly in Muslim regions of the world. From the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan to the Sunni Islamist foreign fighter groups in Syria and Iraq, "Islamic fundamentalists claim their calls for jihad [of foreign fighters] are in defense of the transnational Islamic community."[149] More than 50 years ago, James N. Rosenau, former professor of International Affairs at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, proposed that foreign fighters were mostly likely to be attracted to foreign conflicts that were framed as a "global struggle over deeper identity-based issues."[150]

Street gangs are also built on a salient identity. Some gangs are based on ethnic identity, others on nationality, and others on location. There are occasions when the gang's identity is based on a combination of two identities, and the salient identity is based on the situation. An example is the Bloods, gangs that operate primarily on the West and East Coasts, with small groups scattered throughout the United States. Within the Bloods gang there are two subgroups: the West Coast Bloods and the United Blood Nation (East Coast Bloods). When a Bloods gang member has an issue with an outside gang, the salient identity of the individual and all other members of the collective Bloods group are as Bloods members. But when internal issues arise within the Bloods gang and it is between a West Coast Blood member and a United Blood Nation member, the salient identity of the individual gang members change to whichever subgroup they belong, West Coast Blood member or United Blood Nation member.[151] This shows the multiple

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[147] Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization," 19.

[148] Ibid., 25.

[149] Ibid., 19.

[150] Borum and Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 4.

[151] Gregg Etter, "Common Characteristics of Gangs: Examining the Cultures of the New Urban Tribes*," Journal of Gang Research* 5, no. 2 (1998): 22, http://libproxy.nps.edu/ login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/614592240?accountid=12702.

identities gang members possess, and that the context of the situation dictates which identity is most important.

For National Guard members, nationality is the salient identity associated with membership. All U.S. service members formally swear an oath to defend the United States from all enemies, and to obey the president and any other officer appointed over them. Within the U.S. Armed Forces, there are five separate subgroups: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. Each subgroup has its own customs, norms, and codes of conduct, in addition to the overarching rules and regulations established by the Department of Defense for all military personnel. During combat, these subgroups operate as a single United States military unit, taking command from a single Unified Combatant Command.[152]

Threats from an out-group may take two forms according to Intergroup Threat Theory, which posits that the threats to an in-group may be real or symbolic.[153] Real threats are threats that could negatively affect the group's safety, security, and/or resources.[154] Symbolic threats, on the other hand, are threats to the groups "morality, philosophy, ideology, belief system, values, religion or its worldview."[155] Within the framework of intergroup threat theory, it is the actions of the out-group that the in-group perceives as a threat, rather than any action the in-group initiated.[156] When the in-group is responding to the actions of the out-group, this establishes a defensive position to the in-group, which facilitates a narrative that includes the justified use of violence to defend the group and enable its survival.

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[152] Christopher M. Bourne, "Unintended Consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act," Defense Technical Information Center, 1998, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a525942.pdf.

[153] C. Lausanne Renfro et al., "The Role of Threat in Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action and Its Beneficiaries," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 36, no. 1 (2006): 43, doi:10.1111/j.0021-9029.2006.00003.x as cited in Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison "Intergroup Threat Theory," 4.

[154] Stephan, Ybarra, and Morrison, "Intergroup Threat Theory," 5.

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., 4.

C.   VIOLENCE AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Defensive violence transcends all three groups in this research project. Utilizing the radicalization framework established by Mohammed Hafez, we show that individuals from all three groups go through a similar process of socialization to use or accept the use of violence by fellow group members. Hafez identifies three main elements that reveal the underlying psychological process individuals go through. "Radicalization is a (1) gradual 'process' that entails socialization into an (2) extremist belief system that sets the stage for (3) violence even if it does not make it inevitable."[157]

The difference among the three groups in this study is the qualification of what constitutes extremist beliefs and the justification of violence. Cognitively, extremist beliefs are defined as those that are "far removed from the ordinary."[158] This definition delineates extreme from ordinary, where ordinary represents the mainstream socially accepted belief within a given society or social setting. While military service is socially acceptable, and foreign fighter membership and gang membership are considered deviant to the broader community, the process that individual members go through as part of all three groups, specifically in regards to using violence as an acceptable form of defense is very similar. The Soufan Group observed that the Islamic State, the greatest recipient of the current foreign fighter movement, offers foreign fighters acceptance as long as they adhere to a "narrow set of rules, [which are] strictly enforced," based on the Islamic State's interpretation of religion, and "uniformly applied," regardless of the opinion of the foreign fighter.[159]

This same dynamic is observed in street gang members. University of California Irvine professor James Vigil observes, for example, that for potential gang members "to gain acceptance from peers, an individual will adapt behavioral patterns that initially have little intrinsic meaning to him, and perhaps might even be repugnant, but

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[157] Ibid., 960.

[158] Andrea Bartoli and Peter T. Coleman, "Dealing with Extremists," Beyond Intractability, September 2003, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dealing-extremists.

[159] Barrett "Foreign Fighters," 13.

nevertheless are requisites for gang membership."[160] In the military, all service members go through an initial recruit training once they join, colloquially referred to as boot camp. During initial training "new recruits are immersed in an extensive boot-camp program, in which their civilian status is broken down and the new identity of military recruit is forged," with all associated accepted norms of behavior.[161]

Individual and group dynamics reside at the core of all group interactions: gang interactions with those outside of the gang (out-group), national militaries with foreign entities (out-group), and foreign fighter groups with those outside of their collective group (out-groups). When the in-group perceives a threat from an out-group, even when the perceived threat is irrational, the sense of belonging intensifies within the in-group, while prejudices and negative feelings regarding the out-group also intensify.[162] The negative feelings and prejudices can "heighten cognitive biases that distort" the actions and perceptions of the out-group, which in many cases inevitably leads to violence between the groups.[163]

A majority of Islamic foreign fighter groups frame their actions as fighting a defensive battle, and that devout Muslims should "sacrifice their individual interests for the needs of the [Muslim] community."[164] Recruiters initiate the radicalization process by stressing that their in-group will "suffer even greater costs with inactivity."[165] Recruiters frame the threat to the in-group as "an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure," normally in the form of violence.[166]

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160 Ibid.

161 Joshua J. Jackson et al., "Military Training and Personality Trait Development: Does the Military Make the Man, or Does the Man Make the Military?," *Psychological Science* 23, no. 3 (2012): 271. doi:10.1177/0956797611423545. Joshua J. Jackson, Felix Thoemmes, Kathrin Jonkmann, Oliver Lüdtke, and Ulrich Trautwein

162 Amanda Taub, "A Social Reflex: Police and Blacks, Seeing Threat, Close Ranks," *New York Times,* July 12, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/us/police-shootings-race.html.

163 Ibid.

164 Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 25.

165 Ibid.

166 Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 24.

The process of socialization into a group that may call for violence, even if it is not inevitable, is also found in gang and military recruitment. In gangs, new members are indoctrinated to "internalize and adhere to alternative norms and modes of behavior [if they want to achieve] a sense of importance, self-esteem, and identity, [with the most important aspect] to attain status is to develop a reputation for being violent."[167] Even within the military, where conducting violence to defend the nation is generally accepted, service members must be indoctrinated because it is not innate.

Retired Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall interviewed service members upon their return after World War II and found that "even battle-hardened veterans of elite units—even in the most desperate straits—rarely shot directly at the enemy."[168] He summarized that the service members "come from a civilization in which aggression, connected with the taking of life, is prohibited and unacceptable."[169] Initial military recruit training serves to indoctrinate and operationalize service members to use violence as a necessary component of individual defense and the defense of the nation. Many exercises during initial recruit training revolve around violence. "Violence directed at [recruits] was merged with the learning how to do violence … [because learning to be violent] meant learning how to protect their lives," and the lives of their fellow service members.[170]

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[167] Paul B. Stretesky and Mark R. Pogrebin, "Gang-Related Gun Violence: Socialization, Identity, and Self," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36 no. 85 (2007): 87, doi:10.1177/0891241606287416.

[168] Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9.

[169] Ibid.

[170] William Arkin and Lynne R. Dobrofsky, "Military Socialization and Masculinity," *Journal of Social Issues* 34, no. 1 (Winter 1978):160, http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/616342229?accountid=12702.

IV.   U.S. STREET GANG COMPARISON

The conceptual life-cycle of street gang members can be broken down into three parts: joining the gang/group, supporting the gang/group; and disengaging and desisting from the gang/group. In this chapter, the gang member life-cycle framework is applied to Islamist foreign fighters.

U.S. street gangs are located throughout the country and have very diverse names, slogans, and identities. A street gang can be defined as a group of "three or more individuals," who share a common identity, and whose purpose, in part, is to "use violence or intimidation to engage and further its criminal activity and objectives."[171] All gangs have an identity traditionally reflected in their name, and all gangs serve a purpose to their members, whether it is for familial bonding or material gain.[172] The crime and violence that street gangs conduct are to "enhance or preserve the association's power, reputation, or economic resources."[173] Drug dealing and theft are some of the acceptable criminal behaviors allowed within street gangs.

Street gang disengagement and desistance programs have been successful at supporting gang members when they start to doubt their membership in the gang, by providing opportunities to exit the gang and transition to productive members of society.[174] The role of social identity and role transition in disengagement and desistance is critical. A disengaged street gang member, who still harbors a positive social identity as a gang member, may feel compelled to re-join or to take action to support the gang if he or she perceives that the former gang is being threatened.[175] The process of cognitively exiting the gang involves role transition from self-identifying as a gang

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[171] "2013 National Gang Intelligence Center Gang Report," FBI, 2013, 7, https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/stats-services-publications-national-gang-report-2013.

[172] James C. Howell, "Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs," Department of Justice, 2010, 4, https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/231116.pdf..

[173] Ibid.

[174] Howell, "Gang Prevention," 12.

[175] Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 5.

member to an ex-gang member with a positive self-view in their new role as an ex-gang member.[176]

A.   CONCEPTUAL LIFE-CYCLE

The following sections will explore the conceptual life-cycle of gang members and foreign fighters, which will show the similar paths that gang members and foreign fighters cognitively move along to join their group and then exit their group. Within this section the conceptual life-cycle process is broken into three parts: joining the group, supporting the group, and disengaging and desisting from the group. For each part of the life-cycle, the process that gang members progress through is detailed first and used as the framework to explore the process that foreign fighters progress.

1.   Joining the Group

The actual process of joining a street gang is varied but marked by three distinct dynamics: interest in the gang, contact with members of the gang, and a willingness to engage in violence.[177] The process is neither linear nor limited to a single occurrence; still, these factors are important for effective disengagement and desistance programs. A gang member may proceed through the entire process of joining with one gang, or he or she may go through parts of the process and stop, only to repeat parts of the process with the same gang or go through the entire process with another gang.

Intertwined in this process are several "pull" and "push" factors that lead prospective members to join gangs.[178] Pull factors are seen by the individual as positive benefits to membership, while push factors are perceived negative conditions or forces that push the individual toward gang membership for the perceived benefit. A

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[176] Ibid.

[177] Stanley S. Taylor, "Why American Boys Join Street Gangs," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 5, no. 8 (2013): 2, doi:10.5897/IJSA12.073.

[178] Decker and Van Winkle, *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence,"* as cited in James C. Howell, "Why Do Youth Join Gangs?," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), 1998, http://www.ojjdp.gov/jjbulletin/9808/why.html.

combination of the previously mentioned factors serves as the catalyst(s) for an individual to become a U.S. street gang member.[179]

Primary pull factors on gang member recruits are:

- to enhance their identity and/or social status,

- to fulfill a need for excitement, and/or

- to improve their economic situation through the ability to engage in drug/ narcotic trafficking and other crime.[180]

Primary push factors on gang member recruits are:

- for personal protection,

- to achieve a familial relationship, and/or

- to achieve a sense of belonging/identity.[181]

As with prospective gang members, intertwined within the process of joining a group/gang are both pull and push factors for foreign fighter recruits.[182] The report on *Why Youth Join al Qaeda* identified that all foreign fighters were "looking for something," which suggests five motivational reasons for foreign fighter recruits to become foreign fighters. These are directly correlated to the previously referenced gang member pull and push factors: seeking revenge, status, identity, thrills, or tangible benefit.[183]

The five motivational factors described by Venhaus can be split into pull and push categories. The status seeker, thrill seeker, and tangible benefit seeker are all motivated by pull factors, whereas the revenge seeker and identity seeker are motivated by push factors. According to Venhaus, the foreign fighter revenge seeker is an individual looking

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Borum and Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 3.

[183] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 9, and Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 11.

to right a perceived wrong.[184] These foreign fighters "often showed signs of an inflated sense of self-worth."[185] The foreign fighter identity seeker, which was most represented in the foreign fighter group, is searching for a group that satisfies a salient identity that he/she perceives.[186] "The motivation to define oneself by the group identity … is almost universal among developing adolescents … [and is one of the factors] that draws young people to [foreign fighter groups and] street gangs."[187] Foreign fighter status seekers perceive that they do not assimilate into society because of their identity.[188] The status seeker was mostly found in the Muslim diaspora, especially in the West.[189] The foreign fighter thrill seeker is an individual who is motivated to experience and survive adventures.[190] The foreign fighter tangible benefit seeker is looking for personal tangible benefits in the form of money, goods, food, and/or having their debts paid.[191] An important note about receiving financial benefit from becoming a foreign fighter is that "recruiters typically explicitly inform [foreign fighters] prior to their enlistment that their services will bring minimal, nonguaranteed payments, often in a nonconvertible currency."[192]

In addition to similar motivating pull and push factors, the cognitive process that foreign fighter prospects go through to join their respective groups is very similar to that of gang members, revealing that the reasons foreign fighters join their groups is not unique. Prior to joining foreign fighter groups, foreign fighter prospects explore potential groups in two main ways: through personal contact with a member, associate, or

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[184] Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 8.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Ibid., 10.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Ibid., 9.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 11, and Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 9.

[191] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 9.

[192] Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 17.

disseminator/recruiter; or through the Internet.[193] A majority of foreign fighter prospects self-initiate the process of becoming a foreign fighter rather than being recruited or coerced.[194] The proliferation of the Internet coupled with the explosion of social media has enabled foreign fighter prospects to conduct their own research into potential foreign fighter groups in privacy and from anywhere in the world. For U.S. foreign fighters, the Internet was central to their eventual decision to become a foreign fighter.[195] Foreign fighter groups like Islamic State and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, fully aware that potential recruits are using the Internet to conduct their own inquiries into the group, have created a robust presence on various social media platforms to attract foreign fighter prospects. The foreign fighter groups use "propaganda aimed at multiple audiences, including references to Western popular culture," to attract Western foreign fighter prospects.[196]

Traditional social networks such as family and friends help facilitate recruitment by emphasizing the benefits of membership.[197] Documents discovered pertaining to foreign fighters in Iraq after the 2003 U.S. invasion indicate that the "overwhelming majority of [foreign fighters] made the journey in small groups (at least two)."[198] The Sinjar Records also reveal that foreign fighter prospects joined the conflict in groups rather than individually: "Of the 202 fighters that recorded their date of arrival in Iraq, 46.5 percent (94) of them arrived on the same day as another individual from their hometown."[199] The records do not explicitly state how they were recruited, but one can

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[193] Joseph A. Carter, Shiraz Maher, and Peter R. Neumann, "#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks," International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, 2014, 8, http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ICSR-Report-Greenbirds-Measuring-Importance-and-Infleunce-in-Syrian-Foreign-Fighter-Networks.pdf.

[194] Marc Sageman, "Leaderless Jihad," University of Pennsylvania Press (2008), as cited in Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 1, 5; Jensen, James, and Tinsley, "Overview," 1.

[195] Jensen, James, and Tinsley, "Overview," 1.

[196] Lisa Curtis et al., "Combatting the ISIS Foreign Fighter Pipeline: A Global Approach," The Heritage Foundation, Special Report #180 on Terrorism (2016), http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2016/01/combatting-the-isis-foreign-fighter-pipeline-a-global-approach. Luke Coffey, David Inserra, Daniel Kochis, Walter Lohman, Joshua Meservey, James Phillips, and Robin Simcox, "Combatting the ISIS Foreign Fighter Pipeline: A Global Approach," The Heritage Foundation

[197] Hafez and Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle," 964.

[198] Ibid., 965.

[199] Fishman and Felter, "A First Look at the Sinjar Records," 23; also see Chapter II of this thesis.

reasonably deduce that the foreign fighter prospects traveled together and were most likely recruited together or at least by the same individual.

Based on the previously referenced motivational push-and-pull factors of gang members and foreign fighters, the similarities between the two groups are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Pull Factors between Gang Members and Foreign Fighters[200]

Gang Members	Foreign Fighters
Enhance identity / social status	Status seeker
Need for excitement	Thrill seeker
Improve economic situation	Tangible benefit seeker

Table 2. Push Factors between Gang Members and Foreign Fighters[201]

Gang Members	Foreign Fighters
Protection	Revenge Seeker
Familial relationship	Identity Seeker
Sense of belonging / identity	Identity Seeker

Once an individual becomes a member of his or her respective group, he or she engages in various activities in support of the group. The following section details those activities that gang members and foreign fighters engage in, which shows that the goal of each group contain both similarities and differences.

2.   Activity in Support of Group

Once an individual joins a gang, he or she derives a new social identity and, among other perceived benefits, social capital from membership.[202] Social capital for

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[200] Source: Decker and Van Winkle, *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence,* as cited in James C. Howell, "Why Do Youth Join Gangs?," Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.ojjdp.gov/jjbulletin/9808/why.html; and Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 11;. Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 9.

[201] Source: Ibid.

[202] Scott Decker, David Pyrooz, and Richard Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 24 no. 2, 2014, 268, doi: 10.1111/jora.12074.

gang members is considered "the sum of one's relationships and social spheres" as a result of becoming a gang member.[203] The gang member now has power and access as a result of their membership. Gang members' conception of their social role and what social activities are permitted and/or expected is primarily based on their membership within the gang.[204]

Within street gangs, there are three basic hierarchical roles. The three gang roles can be broken further into core and peripheral members.[205] The highest title/role in the gang is the "OG" or original gangster. This title/role denotes a core veteran member of the gang, and someone who has shown dedication and commitment to the gang.[206] The OGs are formal and informal leaders within the gang and determine what level of criminal activity the gang will engage in.[207] Below OGs are "Gs" or gangsters, who are the general members of the group, and also considered core members. The Gs are primarily responsible for coordinating acts of violence directed at those outside the gang.[208] Then the gang has "wannabees," who are individuals who desire to be Gs. The "wannabees" are not actual members but sometimes are the most dangerous because they are trying to show the OGs and Gs that they are worthy of membership into the gang.[209] "Wannabees" constitute peripheral members; while they conduct activities to support the gang, they have no real standing within the gang.[210]

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[203] Richard Moule Jr., Scott Decker, and David Pyrooz, "Social Capital, the Life Course, and Gangs," in *Handbook of Life-Course Criminology,* ed. Chris L. Gibson and Marvin D. Krohn (New York: Springer, 2013) doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-5113-6_9.

[204] Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 5.

[205] Gangs traditionally have two ancillary roles, "Gangster groupies," and "Resident G," neither of which serve as prospective membership pool, therefore exploration of their role in the gang is outside the scope of this project.

[206] Lewis Yablonsky, "An Analysis of Gang Roles and Gang Laws," JurisPro, 2000, http://www.jurispro.com/uploadArticles/Yablonsky%20-%20Gang%20Laws.PDF.

[207] Mike Carlie, "The Structure of Gangs," Into the Abyss: A Personal Journey into the World of Street Gangs, 2002, http://people.missouristate.edu/michaelcarlie/what_i_learned_about/gangs/ structure_of_gangs.htm.

[208] Ibid.

[209] "Group Structure of Youth Gangs: Definitions," Northern Arizona University, BME637: The Class: Gangs: Lesson 1, 2000, http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~carrasco/bme637/class/gangs/lesson7-1-1.html.

[210] Caroline Becerra, "Gangs—The Overall Personal Picture," Stanford University, Ethics of Development in a Global Environment, 1999, https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/ gangcolor/overall.htm.

The typical activity of street gangs is crime. "Typical gang-related crimes include drug trafficking, alien smuggling, armed robbery, assault, auto theft, extortion, fraud, home invasions, identity theft, murder and weapons trafficking."[211] Gang members engage in these activities for two primary reasons: to improve the financial standing of the gang and to defend or acquire territory to conduct the aforementioned activities.[212]

For foreign fighters, their general activities are similar to street gang members but the roles foreign fighters are assigned differ from street gangs based on the goals of foreign fighter groups. Foreign fighter groups aim to improve their financial standing so they can continue to defend/acquire territory, similar to street gangs. Unlike street gangs that have three basic hierarchal roles, Islamic foreign fighter groups have four functional roles: Direct Action, Operational Support, Movement Support, and Logistical Support, based on the goals of the foreign fighter group.[213] "Direct Action" is direct participation in combat and/or fighting, while "Operational Support" describes all activities that are conducted to support direct action and may include identification and planning of targets and preparation of weapons and explosives.[214] "Movement Support" involves recruiting, financial management, and internal and external communications, and "Logistical Support" includes the acquisition and distribution of food, money, supplies.[215] Street gangs roles are based on an individuals' status within the group and based on that status, one can dictate group activities to members in subordinate roles.[216]

In Islamic foreign fighter groups, the roles are delineated more on function than status, because based on the goal(s) of the foreign fighter group there are multiple priorities to simultaneously manage. An example is in IS, where the group must identify targets, pay salaries, make and distribute propaganda videos, and support international travel, in

211 Jason Ryan, "Gangs Blamed for 80 Percent of U.S. Crimes," ABC News, January 30, 2009, http://abcnews.go.com/TheLaw/FedCrimes/story?id=6773423.

212 "2011 National Gang Threat Assessment," FBI, 2012, https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment.

213 Borum and Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 3.

214 Ibid.

215 Ibid.

216 Carlie, "The Structure of Gangs."

addition to purchase and distribute weapons, ammunition, and vehicles.[217] Because the goal of IS is to establish a caliphate in the areas in and around Syria and Iraq, it has assigned its foreign fighters various roles from internal security to sanitation worker.[218] IS even actively recruits for the myriad roles it has to fill. An example comes from an IS recruitment video targeting Westerners, recorded by a Canadian citizen who had joined:

> You know, there's a role for everybody. Every person can contribute something to the Islamic State. It's obligatory on us. If you cannot fight, then you give money, if you cannot give money then you can assist in technology, and if you can't assist in technology you can use some other skills…We can use you. You'll be very well taken care of here. Your families will live here in safety just like how it is back home. You know, we have wide expansive territory here in Syria and we can easily find accommodations for you and your families. My brothers, there is a role for everybody here in Syria…come join before the doors close.[219]

3. Disengagement and Desistance from Group

Disengagement and desistance has consistently been documented as a four-step process that begins with contemplation of gang membership. Berger, Abu-Raiya, Heineberg, and Zimbardo believe that a triggering event initiates the disengagement process.[220] They define a triggering event as a significant negative event or a "positive event that presented a challenge to the epistemic worldview of the gang member."[221] Violence was the predominant factor cited by ex-gang members as the reason for disengaging from the gang: "There is an upper limit to gang violence and the tolerance that individual gang members have for that violence."[222]

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[217] Ana Swanson, "How the Islamic State Makes Its Money," *Washington Post,* November 18, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/11/18/how-isis-makes-its-money/.

[218] Dodwell, Milton, and Rassler, "The Caliphate's Global Workforce: An Inside Look at the Islamic State's Foreign Fighter Paper Trail."

[219] Evan Kohlmann and Laith Alkhouri, "Profiles of Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 9 (September 2014): 4, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CTCSentinel-Vol7Iss91.pdf.

[220] Rony Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry (*2016): 7, http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000196.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Decker and Van Winkle, *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence,"* 4.

Most other desistance studies indicate that there is a series of motivating factors that gradually or abruptly lead gang members to start the process of disengaging from their gang.[223] The longer a gang member remains in the gang, the more disconnected he or she becomes from mainstream society. This disconnect increases the cost of gang membership because less connection to mainstream society results in the gang member becoming more involved in drug-related crime and violence; they do not go to school or work, which starts to worsen the social conditions that the gang member experiences. This cumulative buildup of negative experiences eventually reaches a tipping point where the gang member gets disillusioned with their membership within the gang, which initiates the process of exiting the gang.[224]

During the first phase of gang desistance, negative experiences build up for the gang members, as was previously referenced, causing the gang member to start the cognitive process of evaluating the cost of gang membership to him or herself.[225] After acknowledging that the cost of membership outweighs the benefits, the gang member starts to assess the legitimacy of the gang, his or her relationships, or lack thereof with his or her pre-gang family, and the cost of violence to the individual as a member of a gang.[226]

The next phase in the gang desistance process for gang members is an evaluation and exploration of alternate roles outside of the gang. The process of exploration can be mental or physical, with the gang members experimenting with new social roles outside of the gang. The gang members, depending on how disconnected they were from mainstream society, may want to experiment with new social roles prior to actually leaving the gang. Their main contemplation within this phase is whether the new role will be more positive for them than their current situation in the gang.[227] This phase is only limited by the opportunities available to the gang member outside of the gang. The more

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[223] Young and Gonzalez, "Getting Out of Gangs, Staying Out of Gangs," 2.

[224] Ibid., 1.

[225] Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," 268; Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 7.

[226] Ibid., 7–8.

[227] Ibid., 274; Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 9.

opportunities available to the gang member, the more the gang member can mentally and physically explore and evaluate the positives and negatives of leaving the gang for a new role in society. According to Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule, once a gang member identifies a new group and role to which he or she aspires, he or she engages in the cognitive process of "anticipatory socialization," where the gang member is looking forward to their new role and "severing ties to [their] old roles."[228]

Following evaluation and exploration is physical disengagement or exiting from the gang. During this phase, the gang member physically separates from their gang. "This stage is varied in terms of style, duration, and finality."[229] Gang members leave their gangs one of two ways. The first way is an abrupt exit, also known as "knifing-off," a sudden, complete cessation of interaction or association with the gang.[230] Being a victim of violence was the predominant factor cited by gang members for them knifing-off from their gang.[231] One gang member stated that shortly after she was in a fight with a girl that pulled a knife on her, her fellow gang member was shot, and that she knew instantly that she did not want to be a gang member any longer.[232] The other manner to exit the gang is through a gradual process. Gradual separation can take many forms, and is usually dependent on the person's role or rank within the gang, the violence level within the gang, and "most importantly the level of support the gang member has external to the gang."[233] One ex-gang member, who was an OG of his gang, stated that after the leader of his gang was arrested and convicted for gang-related activities, that he had second thoughts about staying in the gang. The gang member would go back and forth from "one day [he] quit [the gang], the next day [he] would [conduct gang member activities such as drug dealing, shootings, etc.]."[234] What eventually enabled this ex-gang member to completely disengage his gang was returning to his childhood church. The church helped

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[228] Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," 274.

[229] Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 9.

[230] Pyrooz, Decker, and Webb, "The Ties That Bind," 3.

[231] Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," 275.

[232] Ibid.

[233] Ibid., 277.

[234] Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 9.

him "realize [he] needed to change up and give back to the community."[235] The support the ex-gang member received outside the gang helped him achieve desistance.

Members who are more central to the leadership of the gang have a more difficult time leaving the gang. Their social network is mostly made up of fellow gang members, many of whom are also close to the leadership of the gang, so there is a lot of peer pressure to stay in the gang and presumably very little pull on the gang member from outside the gang. (In contrast, gang members on the periphery still have friends and acquaintances who are not involved with the gang and serve as pulls on the gang members in addition to providing them the social support necessary to exit the gang.) External support has been cited by a majority of gang members as a key factor in their disengagement because no matter what a gang member's position is within the gang, there is pressure from within the gang to maintain their membership.[236] External support has been credited with providing "countervailing pressures to remain in the gang," so the more external support the gang member has, the greater their ability to exit the gang.[237] Familial relationships, employment, girlfriend/boyfriend relationships, school, church, and even the criminal justice system can serve as the external support necessary for a gang member to disengage from the gang.[238]

The final phase of gang desistance is when the ex-gang member assumes a new social identity. This coincides with what Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule call "post-exit validation."[239] Post-exit validation is the cognitive process of a gang member adopting a new identity as an ex-gang member, which is then reaffirmed through an external source such as a family member, community member, or a new friend.[240] In this phase, ex-gang members successful at maintaining gang desistance find "new supportive groups that are

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[235] Ibid., 10.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Scott Decker, David Pyrooz, and Richard Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," 277.

[239] Ibid. 276.

[240] Ibid. 276

unconditionally willing to accept them [and their new identity]."[241] Post-exit validation is especially important from law enforcement, because an ex-gang member who has negative experiences with law enforcement, based primarily on their previous identity as a gang member, may be pushed back into the gang.[242] The gang members may perceive that if they are always going to be treated like a gang member, whether they are one or not, they might as well be one.

Many times gang disengagement is a back-and-forth process before complete gang desistance is achieved.[243] Gang disengagement and desistance is a non-linear process of cognitively transitioning from identifying as a gang member to an ex-gang member. The process normally starts as a mental exploration of what other better opportunities are available to the gang member outside of the gang. Once the gang member considers a more positive role outside the gang, the member physically disengages from the gang to assume his or her new identity. Between disengagement and desistance, the gang member undertakes a new identity as an ex-gang member, which he or she wants validated by people inside and outside of the gang. Without validation as an ex-gang member, there is a greater likelihood that the ex-gang member may get pulled back into the gang.[244] Once an ex-gang member gets pulled back into the gang, he or she may fully re-commit to the gang, or they may begin the process of exiting the gang almost immediately.[245]

Ex-foreign fighters, like ex-gang members, have pointed to push-and-pull factors motivating their exit/departure.[246] The most common push factors as reported in the ICSR report are violence and quality of life issues.[247] Ex-foreign fighters did not like that the IS committed brutal violence against fellow Sunni Muslims, the same people they

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[241] H. Tajfel and J. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Inter-Group Conflict," as cited in Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 13.

[242] Berger et al., "The Process of Desistance Among Core Ex-Gang Members," 12.

[243] Decker, Pyrooz, and Moule Jr., "Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions," 274.

[244] Ibid., 280.

[245] Ibid., 277.

[246] Borum and Fien, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 3.

[247] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 11.

were supposed to be protecting. This led the ex-foreign fighters to fear that they too might be the victims of brutal violence at the hands of the IS. Some quality of life issues were also related to violence, with some ex-foreign fighters complaining that foreign fighters were "exploited and used as cannon fodder."[248] Other quality of life issues pertained to "shortages of electricity and basic goods."[249] The most common pull factor cited is disillusionment, after witnessing infighting, corruption, and un-Islamic behaviors.[250] Ex-foreign fighters believed that the infighting between the various Sunni Muslim groups was religiously illegitimate, since they thought the goal of all the groups were to defend Sunni Muslims from the atrocities committed against them by the Syrian government.[251]

The process of foreign fighters questioning membership is directly linked to possible alternative roles outside of their foreign fighter group. A majority of the ex-foreign fighters in the ICSR report stated that the reason they became foreign fighters was to protect fellow Muslims, and specifically Sunni Muslims, from "apostates" and "infidels."[252] For foreign fighters to leave their group, they must be sure that the group "does not represent the 'true faith,' and that defecting does not equal leaving Islam."[253]

While the foreign fighter goes through mental contemplation of exiting or maintaining membership within the foreign fighter group, he or she also is evaluating the physical prospects of exiting the group. Foreign fighters' exploration of roles outside of the foreign fighter group extends beyond just exiting the group, to include where they will live, what they will do for employment, and what their social network will be like. Exiting the group and returning to one's original country of residence is only one of several pathways foreign fighters take. They may also become "government assets,

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[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid., 10.

[252] Ibid., 10.

[253] Ibid., 11.

foreign fighter facilitators, engage in social revolutionaries in their home countries, become global jihadists, or unaffiliated terrorists."[254]

Foreign fighters understand that most of their resident governments are "likely to see them as 'sleepers' or 'dangerous returnees.'"[255] This reality severely limits the ability of many foreign fighters to reasonably contemplate or explore roles outside of their group. In addition, as of July 2016, many governments will not let the foreign fighter back into their home country or will arrest them upon their return, and "practically everyone who is known to have returned faces legal proceedings and lengthy prison sentences."[256] The blanket criminalization of ex-foreign fighters limits their options when they contemplate leaving their foreign fighter group and desire to return to their country of origin to peacefully reintegrate back into society. The lack of formal reintegration opportunities may be keeping foreign fighters in the conflict zone rather than having them depart, skewing the data on how many foreign fighters actually leave their foreign fighter group.

Once the foreign fighter has perceived the benefits of exiting the foreign fighter group, there follows the process of physically disengaging. Unlike U.S. street gangs, where the process is either gradual or abrupt, for foreign fighters it is always abrupt. Foreign fighter groups, specifically Islamic State, do not want foreign fighters to leave the group and will kill those who attempt to leave.[257] In addition, because foreign fighter groups employ internal security, foreign fighters fear sharing their plans or seeking assistance in exiting the group, even from those they once considered friends. Therefore, "defection from the group becomes doubly costly: the cost of lost friendships and the cost of shattered identity forged in the crucible of underground activity."[258] This does not mean that foreign fighters are not disengaging from their groups. A *Wall Street Journal* article from June 2016 cited several Western diplomats who stated that "about 150

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[254] Mohammed M. Hafez, "Jihad after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 2 (2009): 75, doi:10.1080/10576100802639600.

[255] Ibid.

[256] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 13.

[257] Ibid, 12.

[258] Hafez and Mullins, "The Radicalization Puzzle," 965.

citizens from six [Western] countries have sought help" in exiting from IS, and several hundred other foreign fighters are believed to have returned to Europe.[259]

Data regarding ex-foreign fighters assuming new social identities after they have disengaged from their groups is deficient, even though reports acknowledge that foreign fighters have returned to their country of origin. The issue with identifying and tracking these returning foreign fighters is that currently there is no incentive for ex-foreign fighters "to come out and share their story."[260]

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[259] Maria Abi-Habib, "Islamic State Members From the West Seek Help Getting Home," *Wall Street Journal,* June 6, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-members-from-the-west-seek-help-getting-home-1465244878.

[260] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 13.

V.   ARMY NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER POST-DEPLOYMENT COMPARISON

The other comparative model that was used for assessing the applicability of reintegrating returning ex-foreign fighters was the model developed for formerly deployed service National Guard members. This group was selected because of the experiences they have in foreign conflict areas and the extent to which the experiences are similar to those of foreign fighters. In addition, National Guard members represent the greatest similarity to a foreign fighter in that they spend a majority of their time living as civilians while serving in the military on a part-time basis. National Guard members may get activated and deployed to international conflicts in the same manner as active duty (full-time) service members, but less frequently. National Guard members train "one weekend (three to four days) per month plus an additional two to four weeks per year…and deploy once every two to three years for six to 15 months … allowing the service member to live as a civilian as well as a Soldier."[261] National Guard members while on deployment serve as full-time service members and engage in all the same activities as active-duty service members. The transition from civilian to Soldier is similar to foreign fighters who live as civilians, deploy to conflict areas, and engage and/ or support operations conducted by their foreign fighter group full time until they are killed or disengage from the conflict zone.

When National Guard members complete their deployments, they return to the United States and reintegrate back into their communities, forced to resume civilian life much more quickly and abruptly than active-duty service members, who live and work among other service members and their families, who understand the military culture and deployment process. Foreign fighters may also abruptly return to civilian life after they exit the conflict zone.[262] These similarities make National Guard members' conceptual

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[261] "Army National Guard vs. Active Duty Special Forces," National Guard, 2016, https://www.nationalguard.com/special-forces-arng-vs-active-duty.

[262] Foreign fighters disengage from conflict zones for 1 of 3 ways: they die, they become global jihadists who travel to the next conflict zone, or they return or travel to another host country to reintegrate back into society, Michael Noonan and Phyl Khalil, "North American Foreign Fighters." *Journal for Deradicalization* (Winter 2014/15), 70, http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/6/6.

life-cycle the most optimal to compare to foreign fighters, in terms of military-service member subgroup.

The ongoing international conflicts that the U.S. military has been engaged in since 9/11 have provided researchers ample data points to assess on the conceptual life-cycle of National Guard members from joining, to activities that National Guard members partake in on deployment, to redeployment back to the United States. According to Military.com, the largest military and veteran membership organization, "more than 200,000 Army Guard Soldiers have been mobilized for active duty overseas since 9/11. At one point in 2005, half of the combat brigades in Iraq were Army Guard units, and a Guard division headquarters commanded active-duty brigades for the first time since World War II."[263]

A. CONCEPTUAL LIFE-CYCLE

While the focus of the comparative assessment is the post-deployment reintegration, I deconstructed the overall conceptual life-cycle of National Guard members. The following sections explore the conceptual life-cycle of National Guard members and foreign fighters, which show that National Guard members and foreign fighters engage in similar activities and share common experiences while deployed in a foreign conflict zone. The following section details the different motivations that cause individuals to join the National Guard as compared to foreign fighter groups. Within this section, the conceptual life-cycle process is broken into three parts—joining the group, supporting the group, and disengaging and desisting from the group. For each part of the life-cycle, the process that National Guard members progress through is detailed first and used as the framework to explore the foreign fighter process.

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[263] Les A. Melnyk, "National Guard: Why So Special?," Military.com, 2013, http://www.military.com/forums/0,15240,108361,00.html

1. Joining the Group

The physical process of joining the National Guard is formal, with a recruit signing a contract for a set amount of time.[264] Since the U.S. Armed Forces became an all-volunteer force in 1973, a number of studies have explored why people join the National Guard and active-duty military, especially knowing the commitment and risks associated with enlistment. In 1977, Charles Moskos was the first to identify the two main motivating factors for individuals to join the military: occupational incentives or institutional incentives.[265] Occupational incentives were the external incentives that accompanied membership, such as pay, benefits, technical training, and other enlistment incentives.[266] The institutional incentives reflected "intrinsic" qualities of "duty to country, loyalty, and commitment [which] are seen as organized around the concept of readiness to sacrifice oneself on behalf of others."[267]

Subsequent studies over the next two decades confirmed the finding by Moskos. Analysis of the 1999 Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (YATS) by the U.S. Department of Defense found that from the broad occupational and institutional incentives outlined by Moskos, five primary areas were most cited by respondents: learning opportunities (job skills and development of self-discipline), working conditions (teamwork and working with people they respect), external incentives (money for education and good pay), patriotic adventure (opportunity for adventure and doing something for their country), and equal opportunity (employment opportunities and harassment-free workplace for

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[264] "Knowing What You Are Committing To," Military.com, 2016, http://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/making-commitment.html, "Guard FAQS," NationalGuard.com, 2016, https://www.nationalguard.com/guard-faqs#faq-461.

[265] Charles Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces & Society* 4, no. 1 (November 1977): 42, doi:10.1177/0095327X7700400103.

[266] Ibid., 43.

[267] Patricia M. Shields, "A New Paradigm for Military Policy: Socioeconomics," *Armed Forces & Society* 19 no. 4 (Summer 1993): 515, as cited in John Eighmey, "Why Do Youth Enlist?," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 2 (January 2006): 308, doi:10.177/0095327X05281017.

women).[268] Further analysis of the YATS by the National Research Council Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment found that "patriotic adventure," which is doing something for one's country and engaging in adventure, was the greatest propensity for youth to enlist in both the National Guard and the active-duty military.[269] The propensity to serve has been a strong indicator of actual enlistment, with "70 percent of those who expressed high desire or likelihood of service actually enter the military within six years of high school graduation."[270]

In a 2006 study of U.S. combat Soldiers though, 70 percent of respondents stated that they had no preconceived plans for military service but eventually joined for the aforementioned occupational incentives.[271] In the same study, enlistees were queried regarding the reason(s) for enlistment. The top four responses were: adventure/challenge (73.9 percent), serve country (65.8 percent), money for college (61.1 percent), and patriotism (54.9 percent).[272] The responses by the enlistees reveal that while occupational incentives are the motivating factors to stimulate individuals to join the military, a duty to serve and patriotism are also very salient.

Based on the previous referenced occupational and institutional incentives that motivate National Guard Members, Tables 3 and 4 outline the similarities and differences between the two groups.

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[268] Michael J. Wilson et al., *Youth Attitude Tracking Study: 1999 Propensity and Advertising Report,* Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC Report No. 2000-019) (July 2000): ii, https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/yats/files2003/99Propensity.pdf. Wilson, Michael J., James B. Greenlees, Tracey Hagerty, Cynthia V. Helba, D. Wayne Hintze Westat, and Jerome D. Lehnus The YATS was a telephonic survey of approximately 10,000 American youth between the ages of 16 and 24, where their opinion was solicited regarding "topics such as enlistment propensity, reasons for entering or not entering the military, advertising awareness, and slogan recognition"; Ibid; Eighmey, "Why Do Youth Enlist?," 309.

[269] Eighmey, "Why Do Youth Enlist?," 309.

[270] Todd Woodruff, Ryan Kelty, and David Segal, "Propensity to Serve and Motivation to Enlist among American Combat Soldiers," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 3 (2006): 353, doi:10.1177/0095327X05283040.

[271] Ibid., 359.

[272] Ibid.

Table 3. Occupation Incentives between National Guard Members and Foreign Fighters[273]

National Guard Members	Foreign Fighters
Learning Opportunities	*No similar motivation found*
External Incentives	Tangible Benefit Seeker
Equal Opportunity	*No similar motivation found*
Working Conditions	*No similar motivation found*

Table 4. Institutional Incentives National Guard Members and Foreign Fighters[274]

National Guard Members	Foreign Fighters
Patriotic Adventure	Identity Seeker/Thrill Seeker

In addition to the marked difference in the ways that National Guard members and foreign fighters join their respective organizations, several other points of comparison stand out on each of these factors. National Guard Members are openly motivated to join the military for external incentives such as money for education and good pay, similar to the foreign fighters classified as tangible benefit seekers. The issue is that foreign fighter tangible benefit seekers are difficult to quantify because many of them proclaim to go to Syria and Iraq out of religious duty.[275] Even with the majority of foreign fighters claiming religious motivations for becoming foreign fighters, a small number of them claim that one of the primary reasons they disengaged from their group was because "none of the luxury goods and cars they had been promised [had] materialized."[276]

Some National Guard Members are motivated to join the military for equal opportunities, such as employment opportunities and especially for women and minorities, a harassment-free workplace. While employment is not a primary motivating

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273 Adapted from Wilson et al., "Youth Attitude Tracking," ii; Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 11; Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 9.

274 Adapted from Ibid.

275 Venhaus, "Why Youth Join al-Qaeda," 11

276 Ibid., 11.

factor for foreign fighters to join their groups as was cited in 2016 by Randy Boram and Robert Fein, "recent analyses show that this is not the reality for most foreign fighters, nor is it a strategy often used to recruit them," yet it may still play a role.[277] In 1984, Osama bin Laden offered to pay $300 a month for foreign fighters to stay in Afghanistan and fight against the Russians; foreign fighters to remain in the conflict zone and join al Qaeda were offered annual salaries of $10,000–$20,000 with benefits such as healthcare and vacations.[278] In Iraq and Syria, the IS and Jabat al-Nusra also provide financial payments to their foreign fighters.[279]

Individuals who were motivated to join the National Guard for patriotic adventure were the most likely to actually join the military. This phenomenon is also seen in foreign fighters who are motivated by religious rather than patriotic duty and to a lesser extent by adventure. These foreign fighters are categorized as foreign fighter identity seekers and foreign fighter thrill seekers.

A review of the of the different reasons why individuals join the National Guard compared to why individuals become foreign fighters reveal that while National Guard members have a more diverse set of motivating factors causing them to join, foreign fighters are mostly predicated on occupational incentives. Interestingly though, individuals with the highest propensity to join National Guard cite patriotism, which is an identity-based motivation not tied to any personal tangible benefit to the individual, similar to foreign fighters who join their groups because it is their religious responsibility.

2.   Activity as Member of the Group

Once a National Guard member has officially joined the Armed Forces, the first step is initial formal training. The first training that all service members get is basic recruit training. Basic recruit training is between eight and twelve weeks long.[280] The goal of initial training is to take individuals and turn them into members of the team (in-

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[277] Borum and Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 4.

[278] Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization," 462.

[279] Ibid.

[280] "Compare Boot Camps At a Glance," Military.com, 2016, http://www.military.com/join-armed-forces/compare-military-boot-camps.html.

group). In addition, initial training seeks to establish esprit de corps, to educate the members on the customs and norms of the group, to instill a drive to uphold the core values of the group, and to "prioritize group values over the goals of the individual."[281] At the completion of basic training, all the Armed Forces branches, including the Army National Guard, require advanced training of their respective service members in a specific functional area.[282]

All service members also go through the same four-step deployment cycle:

1. pre-deployment phase—service members continue their normal training to maintain individual and unit readiness

2. deployment phase—service members go to the designated area of operation or conflict zone to perform military duties in support of the mission

3. post-deployment phase—service members return to their home military installation where they may receive "additional briefings, training, medical evaluations, and counseling"[283]

4. reintegration phase—service members reintegrate with their families and their communities, in addition to returning to their regular military duties[284]

For foreign fighters, the groups they join are militaristic and as a result, foreign fighter activities closely resemble the activities of National Guard members. When foreign fighters join a foreign fighter group, a majority of them engage in some level or type of training. Most of the training occurs in the area where the foreign fighter group operates and/or near the conflict zone.[285] The cornerstone of the training is "extreme ideological learning" and group physical fitness to "establish an esprit de corps and …

[281] Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 17.

[282] "Career Search," Today's Military, 2016, http://todaysmilitary.com/working/career-fields-and-profiles. According to Today's Military, there are approximately 23 different functional fields in the Armed Forces, from accounting and budget and finance, to transportation, supply and logistics; Ibid.

[283] "Deployment: An Overview," Military.com, 2016, http://www.military.com/deployment/deployment-overview.html.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Ciluffo, Cozzens, and Ranstorp, "Foreign Fighters," 5.

operating [in a] group environment under a leadership figure."[286] This training aims to solidify commitment to the cause and to the group. The training is simultaneous to their joining the group and/or arriving where the group engages in activities. The amount of training that foreign fighters receive varies by their respective role, typically one of four:

1. direct action—direct participation in combat and/or fighting

2. operational support—direct support for direct action. May include identification and planning of targets, and preparation of weapons, and explosives.

3. movement support—involves recruiting, financial management, internal and external communications.

4. logistical support—acquisition and distribution of food, money, supplies.[287]

Using the service member deployment cycle as a framework for comparison, the following demonstrates the similarities and nuanced differences between National Guard members and foreign fighters. Foreign fighters progress through Step 1, the pre-deployment phase, except that foreign fighters may conduct their training in or near the conflict zone, technically during deployment rather than beforehand. Foreign fighters also go through Step 2, the deployment phase, where they conduct duties to support their group, traditionally based on, but not limited to, their role within the group. For Step 3, the post-deployment phase, and Step 4, the reintegration phase, foreign fighters usually go through Step 3 or Step 4. Because there is no formal post-deployment reintegration process, foreign fighters either demobilize or go someplace else and prepare for their next military engagement. Therefore, foreign fighters who go to Step 3 will likely transition from one conflict to another. This shortened process is observed through an exploration of the history of the original al Qaeda members, including Osama bin Laden, who departed Afghanistan after the Soviet–Afghan War only to go to another location to regroup and remobilize.[288] These foreign fighters may receive additional training and

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[286] Ibid., 11.

[287] Borum and Fein, "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters," 3.

[288] Bill Moyes, "Brief History of al Qaeda," PBS, 2008, http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07272007/alqaeda.html.

briefings but no medical evaluations or counseling. Foreign fighters who go to Step 4 do so directly from the conflict zone without a transition phase. The majority of these ex-foreign fighters are looking to go home or to resettle someplace else and not reengage in a conflict.[289] Again, they do not receive any medical evaluations or counseling. These ex-foreign fighters must reintegrate on their own without any guidance. Foreign fighter groups are not concerned with the health or well-being of their members, and they are not concerned with the communities that the ex-foreign fighters are returning to, other than to attract more recruits.[290]

The process of physically disengaging from the combat zone and traveling back to the United States for National Guard members and other service members is the post-deployment phase. Once the service member has returned to the United States, they start to engage in the reintegration phase. Expanding on the reintegration phase of the deployment cycle, the DOD has identified that all Soldiers, National Guard and active-duty, returning from a combat deployment need additional screening and resources to assist them in reintegrating back into normal non-combat life. While there is no set time frame for the reintegration phase, National Guard members may "experience a more extended reintegration period as they experience many significant changes and transitions back into a more permanent civilian life" than active-duty service members, who may be preparing for another deployment.[291] The DOD has instituted additional tasks for both National Guard members and active-duty service members to complete throughout the deployment cycle, and specifically during the reintegration phase. During the pre-deployment phase service members must take the Pre-Deployment Health Assessment (Pre-DHA) within 120 days of deploying, which must be re-validated within 60 days by a health care provider.[292] Then, during the reintegration phase, service members are

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[289] Hegghammer, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?,"1.

[290] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 12.

[291] Todd Yosick et al., "A Review of Post-Deployment Reintegration: Evidence, Challenges, and Strategies for Program Development," Defense Centers of Excellence, 2012, 7, http://www.dcoe.mil/content/Navigation/Documents/Review_of_Post-Deployment_Reintegration.pdf. Yosick, Todd, Mark Bates, Monique Moore, Chris Crowe, Jennifer Phillips, and John Davison

[292] "Cheat Sheet: A Soldier's Guide to Deployment Health Assessments," Guard Your Health, 2016, http://www.guardyourhealth.com/guard-life/mobilization/deployment-health-assessments/.

required to complete "behavioral health-related tasks such as conducting suicide awareness and prevention training, and post-deployment resilience training."[293] All service members are also required to complete a Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) within 30 days of returning to their home base, and a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) between 90 and 180 days of returning from deployment.[294] Each phase, including the original Pre-DHA—taken within 120 of deploying. consists of three parts: resilience training, electronic questionnaires, and an interview with a health care professional.[295]

The reason for the multiple health assessments is that health care providers have discovered that combat deployment can affect service members both mentally and physically. Service members who have deployed to a combat zone, regardless of their role within the military, experience varying degrees of mental and physical stressors.[296] Depending on the length and kind of exposure to the previously referenced mental and physical stressors, combined with the individual's perception and response to the stressors, some service members are at greater risk of clinically suffering from TBI, PTSD, and/or PMD. More than 20 percent of service members deployed to Iraq post-2003 who were in high-conflict areas reported having experienced some level of traumatic brain injury.[297] In addition, 14–22 percent of service members deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq post-2001 have been diagnosed with PTSD. National Guard members report higher rates of PTSD than active-duty service members.[298] The rates of National Guard members being diagnosed with both TBI and PTSD range from 12–89

[293] Sipos et al., "Assessment of an Alternative Postdeployment Reintegration Strategy With Soldiers Returning From Iraq," 186.

[294] "Cheat Sheet."

[295] Ibid.

[296] Brenner et al., "Soldiers Returning from Deployment," 2.

[297] Ibid.

[298] Vanessa Williamson and Erin Mulhall, "Invisible Wounds: Psychological and Neurological Injuries Confront a New Generation of Veterans," Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, 2009, 7, http://www.issuelab.org/resource/invisible_wounds_psychological_and_neurological_ injuries_confront_a_new_generation_of_veterans.

percent depending on several variables, including the "methods used to diagnose PTSD and TBI history (e.g., symptom questionnaires vs. structured clinical interviews)."[299]

A Pew Research Center report on the effects of combat on formerly deployed service members revealed the following:

- Nearly half (44 percent) of post-9/11 veterans say their readjustment to civilian life was difficult.

- About half (48 percent) of all post-9/11 veterans say they have experienced strains in family relations since leaving the military, and 47 percent say they have had frequent outbursts of anger.

- One-third (32 percent) say there have been times where they felt they did not care about anything.

- More than one-third (37 percent) post-9/11 veterans say that, whether or not they were formally diagnosed, they believe they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS).

- These psychological and emotional problems are most prevalent among post-9/11 veterans who were in combat.

  - About half of this group (49 percent) say they have suffered from PTS.

  - And about half (52 percent) also say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences while in the military.

- Of those who had these types of experiences, 75 percent say they are still reliving them in the form of flashbacks or nightmares.

- Overall, about one in six post-9/11 veterans (16 percent) report they were seriously injured while serving in the military, and most of these injuries were combat related.

- The survey finds that post-9/11 veterans who either experienced or were exposed to casualties are more supportive than other post-9/11 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, they also report having more difficulty re-entering civilian life.[300]

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[299] Brenner et al., "Soldiers Returning From Deployment," 2.

[300] "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era," Pew Research Center, 2011, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/.

The Pew Research Report figures, together with the statistics regarding PTSD, TBI, and PMD in formerly deployed service members, reveal that some formerly deployed National Guard members are suffering from one or multiple types of PTS disorder as a result of being in a combat zone. Based on the fact that foreign fighters also operate in the same combat zones as service members, it can be safely presumed that some returning ex-foreign fighters will also suffer from a PTS disorder. Therefore, for successful reintegration to occur, returning ex-foreign fighters will require similar treatment for PTS disorders that formerly deployed service members do.

VI. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The goal of this research project was to explore opportunities for returned U.S. ex-foreign fighters to reintegrate back into the United States after they exited their foreign fighter group and were deemed a non-threat, using existing models designed for comparable groups of individuals. Based on the research described in this thesis, street gang members and National Guard members are analogous to foreign fighters; therefore, an opportunity exists to leverage the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF to develop a reintegration strategy for returning ex-foreign fighters. This chapter first details the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF and then constructs a returning ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategy using aspects of the previously referenced reintegration strategies.

A. STREET GANG EXISTING REINTEGRATION MODEL

The Comprehensive Gang Model contains five core strategies designed to be used in concert, with emphasis placed on individualizability/customizability: community mobilization, opportunities provision, social intervention, suppression, and organizational change and development.[301]

Community mobilization is getting the community engaged in the anti-gang initiative from prevention to reintegration. This aspect of the collective model "works with residents in the target area and community leaders to elicit their ideals and afford them a voice in identifying services and activities in the community" that would best support gang prevention, suppression, and reintegration.[302] Also, incorporating community leaders and residents in the process provides them a sense of ownership in the results, making them more supportive of the gang/ex-gang members as they reenter the community and partake in the services and activities provided.

Opportunities provision is providing job-related education and training to prepare gang/ex-gang members to take advantage of job opportunities specifically for

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[301] "OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model: Planning for Implementation," 5.

[302] Ibid., 22.

them to exit the gang as well as for ex-gang members.[303] The goal is to provide prosocial economic opportunities to gang/ex-gang members to support their disengagement and desistance from gang membership.

Social intervention is a strategy to provide social services to both the individual gang members and family and friends of the gang members "because these peers may contribute to target youth's gang involvement [and/or disengagement]."[304] The gang members and their families are offered a myriad of programs to assist them in "adopting nondeviant values" and also to find prosocial services and programs that meet their individual and/or family needs.[305]

Suppression is a strategy to reduce gang activity through traditional policing and informal police contacts with gang/ex-gang members, their families, and friends. Police officers and other formal members of the criminal justice system work with other members of the community to develop "intervention plans, positive social contacts with target gang members, community mobilization efforts, and gang prevention activities."[306]

Organizational change and development is the process of ensuring all the four aforementioned strategies are working as one team, regardless of how active one strategy is compared to the others. Utilizing a team approach supports information sharing, activities planning, individual gang/ex-gang member progress, and ensures that the policies and "practices being used are community oriented, and with the interests, needs, and cultural backgrounds of local residents and target youth."[307]

As was detailed previously, gang members go through a process of disengaging from gangs starting with the evaluation of the pros and cons of gang membership. The Comprehensive Gang Model provides the gang member with positive alternatives to gang membership through the social intervention and opportunities provision strategies.

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[303] Ibid.

[304] Ibid.

[305] Ibid., 23.

[306] Ibid

[307] Ibid., 24.

Working in concert with building positive alternatives outside the gang, suppression reinforces the negatives of gang membership by highlighting the negative consequences of committing criminal acts and being a gang member. When the gang member then explores alternative roles to gang membership both cognitively and physically, community mobilization, opportunities provision, and social intervention support the gang member in envisioning himself or herself in a prosocial role within the community. The prosocial role may be a mentor to new ex-gang members or simply in a job that affords the ex-gang member an opportunity to earn money the socially accepted way. Then when the gang member physically disengages from the gang, community mobilization, social intervention, and opportunities provision work together to provide the ex-gang member positive programs to aid him or her achieve the prosocial role(s) that was envisioned during the exploration phase prior to actual disengagement. The Comprehensive Gang Model in its entirety is critical to gang desistance. This multidisciplinary model is flexible and easily adjusted to the individual needs of gang/ex-gang members from any cultural or ethnic background.

The Comprehensive Gang Model has been successfully applied throughout the United States to target gang members and support them in exiting their gangs. In 2003, OJJDP conducted a five-year study of cities with large gang populations: Los Angeles, CA; Milwaukee, WI; North Miami Beach, FL; and Richmond, VA. Each city applied the Comprehensive Gang Model, varying specific components based on the needs of its respective local population. In Los Angeles, for example, the suppression strategy was uniquely applied, because it was "implemented through a partnership with an existing multiagency law enforcement collaborative, the Community Law Enforcement and Recovery (CLEAR) program."[308] Suppression can be equally applied through a single law enforcement agency or unit within an agency, such as with the Pittsburg Police Department (PPD) in California. As part of the department's community policing efforts, PPD "aggressively targeted gang and narcotic issues and worked with property owners"

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[308] OJJDP, "Findings From the Evaluation of OJJDP's Gang Reduction Program," 2010, 4, www.preventgangsnova.org/GangReductionStudy.pdf.

to prevent future gang activities by keeping their properties gang-member free and reporting any gang activity.[309]

The outcomes in all four cities were successful.[310] Some notable findings were that "outreach [within] the communities improved communication on gang issues within the target areas and researchers found evidence of improved communication among organizations…such as between law enforcement and service providers."[311] Also, each city had to adjust the model to "local conditions," demonstrating that while the Comprehensive Gang Model is not a one-size-fits-all it is flexible and tailorable to meets the varying needs of different communities.[312]

As was previously stated, there is no reintegration model for returning ex-foreign fighters. Based on the similarities of street gang members and returning ex-foreign fighters who were shown throughout this chapter, Chapter VI will recommend the applicable Comprehensive Gang Model strategies that can be utilized to successfully reintegrate ex-foreign fighters back into the United States.

B. MILITARY EXISTING REINTEGRATION MODEL

Reintegration in the military context has been defined as "the process of transitioning back into personal and organizational roles after deployment."[313] The concept of reintegration is a positive one, as National Guard members return to their families and to the creature comforts of home. The reality of reintegration is often different, with many National Guard members experiencing personal struggles, to include "increased tension at the personal, family and work levels and exacerbation of

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[309] Carlos Fields, "Award-Winning Community Policing Strategies," International Association of Chiefs of Police Community Policing Committee, September 2007, 19, https://ric-zai-inc.com/Publications/cops-w0451-pub.pdf.

[310] Ibid., 10.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Shannon L. Pursley, Arta Day, and E. Kevin Kelloway, "Bringing the Troops Back Home: Modeling the Postdeployment Reintegration Experience," *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology,* 16, no. 1 (2011): 38–47, doi:10.1037/a0021724 as cited in Yosick et al., "A Review of Post-Deployment Reintegration," 6.

deployment-related stress conditions."[314] According to an article in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, "a survey of service members seeking care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) following deployments to Iraq and/or Afghanistan found that 40 percent of the respondents reported perceiving some to extreme difficulty reintegrating into civilian life."[315]

The DOD uses Total Force Fitness as its framework for maintaining the overall health and well-being of all service members throughout their military careers, with particular attention to successful post-deployment reintegration.[316] The TFF framework consists of "eight distinct domains and five overarching tenets."[317] The eight TFF domains are:

- Physical Fitness—the ability to physically complete missions uninjured and healthy

- Environmental Fitness—the ability to conduct missions in any environment

- Medical and Dental Fitness—the ability to meet medical standards

- Nutritional Fitness—the ability and desire to maintain a nutritional lifestyle

- Spiritual Fitness—the ability "to adhere to beliefs, principles, or values"

- Psychological Fitness—the ability to successfully cope with mental stress

- Behavioral Fitness—the ability to maintain a positive "relationship between one's behavior and health"

- Social Fitness—the ability to "engage in healthy social networks"[318]

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[314] Karl Bolton, et al., "The Enhanced Reintegration Action Plan: The Madigan Experience," *U.S. Army Medical Department Journal* (2008): 38–44, as cited in Yosick et al., "A Review of Post-Deployment Reintegration," 6.

[315] Steven Sayer et al., "Family Problems Among Recently Returned Military Veterans Referred For A Mental Health Evaluation," *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 70, no. 2 (2010): 163–170, as cited in Yosick et al., "A Review of Post-Deployment Reintegration," 6.

[316] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Chairman's Total Force Fitness Framework," A-1.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Ibid., A-2.

In addition to the previously listed domains, TFF has five overarching tenets:

- Total fitness extends beyond the Service member; total fitness should strengthen resilience in families, communities, and organizations.

- A Service member's family's health plays a key role in sustained success and must be incorporated into any definition of total fitness.

- Total fitness metrics must measure positive and negative outcomes, and must show movement toward total fitness.

- Total fitness is linked to the fitness of the society from which the Service members are drawn and to which they will return.

- Leadership is essential in achieving total fitness.[319]

The goal of the TFF is to build resilience through a multidisciplinary approach that includes psychological, behavioral, social, and spiritual well-being of service members, their families, and their communities. The TFF is designed to be applied throughout the career of a service member, whether active duty or a member of the National Guard. Therefore, initial and recurring medical exams in addition to Pre-DHA should serve as initial indicators to identify service members who are in need of extra assistance prior, during and post-deployment. Also, the PDHA and PDHRA should also identify service members who require additional assistance post-deployment. For National Guard members, they must "cope with the challenges of civil society without the same support structure that a base, military medical facility, unit or comprehensive chain of command can offer an active service member."[320]

The DOD has several programs that utilize the holistic approach of the TFF framework, but "the common thread among all the services is the idea of reintegration as a multifaceted and continuous process that is holistic and comprehensive; a process that aims to sustain a physically and psychologically fit mission-ready force while aiding individuals, and those around them, in readjusting to post-deployment life."[321]

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[319] Ibid., A-3.

[320] Yosick et al., "A Review of Post-Deployment Reintegration,"

[321] Ibid.

C.   EX-FOREIGN FIGHTER REINTEGRATION MODEL

As part of the overall strategy to allow ex-foreign fighters to return to their communities, several aspects of the Comprehensive Gang Model and TFF must be mandated for ex-foreign fighters to maximize their opportunity for successful reintegration. First, all ex-foreign fighter reintegration models must include the TFF domains social fitness and spiritual fitness and community mobilization from the Comprehensive Gang Model, especially for Islamic foreign fighters who were motivated to become foreign fighters because they believed defending fellow Muslims is the duty of every devout Muslim. Social fitness, spiritual fitness, and community mobilization will aid ex-foreign fighters in maintaining their religious identity and beliefs but extract the extremist principles that motivated them to become a foreign fighter by surrounding them with positive spiritual community leaders and members. Social fitness and community mobilization will also assist ex-foreign fighters create new positive social networks that will serve their new in-group, and equally important, serve as the critically important countervailing pressure some ex-foreign fighters may need to prevent them from re-adapting their extremists ideologies.

All ex-foreign fighter reintegration models must also include the TFF domain behavioral fitness. Behavioral fitness is critical for the deprogramming of the justifiable belief in the acceptable use of violence by ex-foreign fighters by showing them socially acceptable behaviors to various issues that ex-foreign fighters may encounter. Behavioral fitness is also a critical aspect of reintegration for those ex-foreign fighters who were motivated by excitement, adventure, or revenge, by providing them a positive outlet to find excitement and engage in prosocial behaviors. Behavioral fitness promotes "healthy coping skills, [such as] exercise, spiritual activities, hobbies, and other creative activities."[322]

Ex-foreign fighters who traveled abroad in search of tangible benefits will require the Comprehensive Gang Models' opportunities provision as a key aspect in their reintegration process. These ex-foreign fighters require vocational training so they can

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[322] "Total Force Fitness— Overview," Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, 2016, http://www.realwarriors.net/active/treatment/totalforcefitness.php.

get pro-social employment to earn their tangible benefits. In addition, training and employment can be positive life events that improve self-esteem and create confidence in the ex-foreign fighter.[323]

The TFF domain social fitness and the Comprehensive Gang Models' social intervention both work to ensure that returned ex-foreign fighters are validated as ex-foreign fighters from their communities. This validation supports the ex-foreign fighters shift in identity from a foreign fighter to ex-foreign fighter because without validation of the new identity, the previously held foreign fighter identity may be triggered, which may also activate the behaviors that are acceptable within that role. Social fitness and social intervention also provide ex-foreign fighters and their families the social services that they may need based on individual circumstances. Presumably, some foreign fighters stay for only a short period of time in a conflict zone before deciding that they just want to come home, whereas some foreign fighters may stay in the conflict zone for a protracted amount of time. Based on a myriad of factors, including the role the foreign fighters had, the level of violence witnessed, and the ability of the foreign fighters to manage the mental and physical stress encountered, foreign fighters will have different responses to their experiences. Some returned ex-foreign fighters will plausibly suffer from a PTS disorder, such as PTSD, TBI, or PMD. To ensure that those returning ex-foreign fighters suffering from a PTS disorder get the appropriate treatment, all returning ex-foreign fighters should take a Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) as soon as practically possible. Additionally, all returning ex-foreign fighters should also take a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) between 90 and 180 days after the PDHA to screen for any the disorders or injuries observed in formerly deployed National Guard members. The results of the health assessments could guide the exact health treatment that the returning ex-foreign fighters get, and provide the ex-foreign fighters the support necessary for successful reintegration.

Another important component that all ex-foreign fighter reintegration strategies must include is the Comprehensive Gang Model's suppression. Suppression is based on a

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[323] Neel Burton, "Building Confidence and Self-Esteem," *Psychology Today,* May 30, 2012, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201205/building-confidence-and-self-esteem.

relationship between ex-foreign fighters and members of the criminal justice system, whereby the ex-foreign fighter is constantly reminded of the negatives of foreign fighter group membership and the positives of not being part of a foreign fighter group. Members of the criminal justice system work to remind the ex-foreign fighter of the consequences of identifying with or supporting a foreign fighter group either by conducting domestic activities for the group such as recruiting or facilitating. Suppression enables law enforcement and intelligence agencies to monitor and maintain relationships with returning ex-foreign fighters to make sure that no returned ex-foreign fighter is a threat to the United States. Equally important is the confidence that local law enforcement can instill within their communities that ex-foreign fighters are not a threat, which ideally aids the community in accepting the foreign fighter.

The previously referenced multidisciplinary components of TFF and the Comprehensive Gang Model address the ex-foreign fighter holistically. Based on various motivations that lead individuals to become foreign fighters, taken together with the reasons that foreign fighters disengage from their groups, allows community leaders, social services, or agents of the criminal justice system to develop customizable reintegration programs for the diverse needs of returning ex-foreign fighters.

D.   CONCLUSION

U.S. citizens traveling abroad to become foreign fighters, participating in activities in support of a foreign fighter group, and then disengaging and returning to the United States has long-ranging and long-term homeland security implications for the country at the national and local levels. The prevailing opinion in the United States regarding foreign fighters, based on the previously discussed U.S. strategies targeting foreign fighters, is that if U.S. ex-foreign fighters are allowed to return to their communities they will perpetrate acts of terrorism or they will recruit others from within their communities to become foreign fighters, where they will eventually commit terrorist acts against the United States. This research project has successfully challenged that presumption by revealing that a majority of foreign fighters disengage from their groups and return to their countries of origin because they were disenfranchised from or

disillusioned about their foreign fighter group.[324] Additionally, if a foreign fighter did return to the United States contemplating but not committed to the previously stated nefarious intentions of attacking the United States, the process is not inexorable. The experiences and treatment of returning U.S. ex-foreign fighters may serve as a pivotal moment for him or her. A returned ex-foreign fighter "who [was] motivated to go to Syria by humanitarian concerns, [but joined a foreign fighter group for greater access to the affected people,] and has done no fighting may be radicalized and alienated if treated roughly on their arrival home."[325]

Establishing an ex-foreign fighter reintegration program is risky and complex but necessary. As of this writing, there are only approximately 250 Americans who have traveled abroad to join a foreign fighter group. These relatively low numbers afford the United States the opportunity to develop proactively and preemptively a reintegration strategy utilizing existing reintegration programs designed for individuals who progress through processes or have similar experiences to foreign fighters without overwhelming any community or agency. While this research project focused on Islamic foreign fighters, the recommended reintegration strategy is applicable to all ex-foreign fighters. It is scalable and duplicable in cities and communities throughout the United States. No one knows where the next conflict will arise that will attract U.S. foreign fighters. It could be Europe, as the European Union continues to struggle economically, or in Asia, as China, Japan, and Taiwan continue to compete for territory in the East China Sea. The point is that the United States needs to develop a strategy now, before another diaspora of U.S. citizens are engaged in a foreign conflict, and decide that they want to return home.

E.   AREA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research project explored the development of a reintegration program for returning ex-foreign fighters. It did not explore who the custodian of the program should be. Based on the various components necessary to meet the needs of returning ex-foreign fighters, U.S. government officials should bring together and meet with the various

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[324] Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 11; Lister, "Returning Foreign Fighters," 8

[325] Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria," 16.

stakeholders capable of providing the various services recommended so that they can identify and mitigate the various issues of developing and conducting a reintegration program for ex-foreign fighters including, but not limited to, the issues of program management and funding, confidentiality, and reporting; the numbers of ex-foreign fighters the program can successfully manage; and the metrics of success prior to actual implementation.

Once these issues are addressed, and each stakeholder has acknowledged that they are capable and willing to be part of the reintegration process for returning ex-foreign fighters, the U.S. government should conduct a pilot program. Using a participation model for street gang members where they enter a reintegration program or face the criminal justice system, a returned ex-foreign fighter could be offered an opportunity to avoid jail or other aspects of the criminal justice system if he or she agrees to go through a reintegration program.[326] Having returned U.S. ex-foreign fighters go through a reintegration program will provide the best feedback on what additional steps the United States needs to take to develop a robust program capable of handling and successfully reintegrating all returned U.S. ex-foreign fighters.

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[326] Michelle Young and Robert Thornton, "Gang Courts: An Innovative Strategy for Gang-Involved Offenders," Department of Justice, 2014, 8, www.communitycorrections.org/images/publications/ CCI_Gang_Court_Pub.pdf.

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APPENDIX. IS DISENGAGED FOREIGN FIGHTERS[327]

# Name	Nationality	Sex	Date Disengaged	Source
1 Abdallah al-Sihli	Saudi	M	29/03/15	YouTube
2 Abul Hakim Munabari	Indonesian	M	1/4/2015	*Jakarta Post*
3 Abu Abdallah	Saudi	M	23/10/14	YouTube
4 Abu Abdullah	Syrian	M	10/11/2014	*Telegraph*
5 Abu al-Layth al-Ansari	Syrian	M	1/11/2014	YouTube
6 Abu al-Mouthanna	Syrian	M	6/11/2014	FNC
7 Abu Ammara	Syrian	M	18/02/14	CNN
8 Abu Dujanah al-Libi	Libyan	M	22/06/14	*Jakarta Post*
9 Abu Hamzah	Tunisian	M	16/01/15	*Jakarta Post*
10 Abu Handhala	Syrian	M	23/05/15	*Jakarta Post*
11 Abu Ibrahim	Syrian	M	10/8/2015	Foreign Policy
12 Abu Ibrahim*	Australian	M	9/2/2015	CBS News
13 Abu Julaybib	Syrian	M	6/5/2015	*Jakarta Post*
14 Abu Muthena	Syrian	M	30/08/15	NBC News
15 Abu Omar	Syrian	M	29/09/14	Buzzfeed
16 Abu Yusr al-Masri	Egyptian	M	27/05/14	*Jakarta Post*
17 Adam Brookman*	Australian	M	20/05/15	The Age
18 Ahmad Junaedi	Indonesian	M	1/4/2015	*Jakarta Post*
19 Ali	Tunisia	M	3/2/2015	*NY Daily News*
20 Areeb Majeed	Indian	M	30/11/14	*Times of India*
21 Ayoub B.	German	M	17/07/15	*Telegraph*
22 Bandar Ma'shi	Saudi	M	13/10/14	YouTube
23 Unknown Likely	Turkish	M	14/07/14	BBC
24 Unknown	Syrian	M	25/09/14	NPR
25 Unknown	Syrian	M	4/9/2014	CNN
26 Unknown	Syrian	M	17/11/14	BBC
27 Unknown	Syrian	M	23/01/14	*Jakarta Post*
28 Unknown	Unknown	M	15/09/14	BBC
29 Unknown	Turkish	M	27/07/15	NBC
30 Unknown	Jordanian	M	27/08/15	Khaberni
31 Unknown	British	M	26/08/15	*Independent*
32 Dua	Syrian	F	13/08/15	NBC
33 Ebrahim B.	German	M	17/07/15	ARD
34 Farukh Sharifov	Tajik	M	5/7/2015	AP
35 Ghaith	Tunisian	M	3/2/2015	*NY Daily News*

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[327] Source: Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets," 16.

36 Hamad Abdul Rahman	Saudi	M	3/2/2015	*NY Daily News*
37 Hamza	Iraqi	M	17/03/15	*NY Post*
38 Helmi Alamudi	Indonesian	M	1/14/2015	*Jakarta Post*
39 Jamolbee Khamidova	Tajik	F	21/08/15	BBC
40 Jejoen Bontinck	Belgian	M	11/3/2015	*Guardian*
41 Khadja	Syrian	F	5/10/2014	CNN
42 Majd al-Din	Swiss	M	8/6/2015	*Al Monitor*
43 Mazlan	Indonesian	M	17/08/15	Strait Times
44 Mufri al-Kathami	Saudi	M	23/04/14	YouTube
45 Muhammad al-Sulayti	Saudi	M	7/4/2015	YouTube
46 Muhammad al-Utaybi	Saudi	M	26/03/14	YouTube
47 Muhammad al-Asiri	Saudi	M	13/10/14	YouTube
48 Murad	Syrian	M	19/01/14	*Telegraph*
49 Saleh	Unknown	M	10/3/2015	Sky News
50 Maher Abu Ubaida	Syrian	M	31/07/14	*Al Monitor*
51 Shukee Begum	British	F	15/08/15	*Telegraph*
52 Sofiane	French	M	30/07/15	France TV
53 Sulayman al-Fifi	Saudi	M	26/03/14	YouTube
54 Umm Asmah	Syrian	F	25/06/15	*Jakarta Post*
55 Umm Abaid	Syrian	F	13/07/15	PBS
56 Umm Ous	Syrian	F	13/08/15	NBC News
57 Usaid Barho	Syrian	M	16/12/14	*NY Times*
58 Youssef Akkari	Tunisian	M	3/2/2015	*NY Daily News*

* There is speculation that Adam Brokman and Abu Ibrahim may be the same person, but this could not be fully verified by the time this report went to print.

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